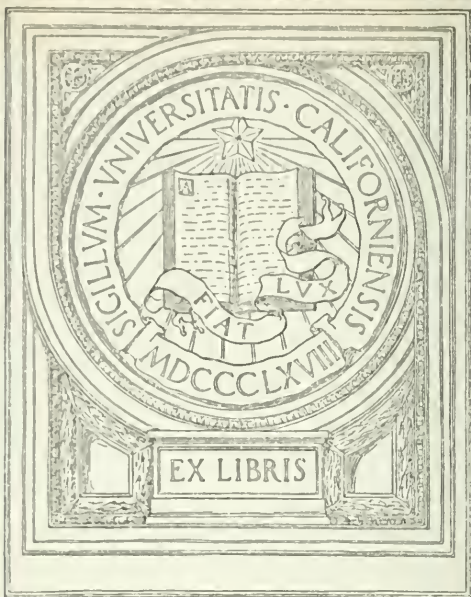


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IN MEMORY OF
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LOUIS XV.

MEN AND WOMEN

OF THE

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

BY

ARSENE HOUSSAYE

II

PART I.



NEW YORK:

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INTRODUCTION.

AN ancient sage has represented human reason under the form of an adventuress in rags resting in the evening upon ruins. Can we not thus represent the Philosophy of the eighteenth century? She has penetrated the temple—she has there inscribed her name; but the temple is naught but a majestic ruin. In the eighteenth century, wit destroyed the heart, reason destroyed poetry. After the reign of Pascal, who sought God in a futuro life, is the reign of Voltaire, who, forgetting God, studied only human life. The heart beat no more; wit devoured all. The seventeenth century was the slave of heaven; the eighteenth century proclaimed itself free, and broke the golden chains which joined heaven to earth. Enslaved, it had the voluptuousness of endurance: free, it stretched its arms, and found but vacuity. Pascal saw the abyss under his feet, but he also saw heaven beyond the abyss. Voltaire saw not the abyss, neither did he see the

heaven beyond. The sackcloth brought Pascal near to eternal life : the pleasures of this world estranged Voltaire from the joys of heaven.

Human reason, whether represented by Pascal or Voltaire, whether it prays or jests, whether it inclines or raises its head, is not paramount. A modern thinker has said : "The nineteenth century can not be condemned to sacrifice philosophy to religion, nor religion to philosophy ; the heaven to earth, nor earth to heaven ; man to God, nor God to man." God and man, — heaven and earth, can act in concert ; they do act in concert, in spite of all the systems known to fame ; but the religion of the seventeenth century and the philosophy of the eighteenth, which at this day are yet at the bar more ardent than ever, are not reconciled : God is on neither side ; God is everywhere, except in the heart that restrains the faith—the heart that consumes the soul.

But here is not the place to erect a doctrine upon the quicksand of fancy. If, as has been said, human life is the dream of God, God it can likewise be said is the dream of man. All the minds that he has dazzled with his light have sought to follow him in his eternal works. I have only wished to indicate at the commencement of this work from what point of view I have contemplated the eighteenth century under its serious aspect. The eighteenth century has given birth to the revolution ; the revolution has created a new world upon the ruins of the old ; we have come out of it still more free than our fathers the encyclopædists. With liberty let us advance. The world is ours, but the light of the world is with God.

't is the contrasts which strike us most in the eighteenth century: the gay rays which lighted a court of thorough voluptuaries, regarding neither law nor gospel, soon lighted a people armed with antique virtues, combating an entire world more by their audacity than their arms. Strange age!—each year surprises you by its grandeur and its meanness, by its strength and its cowardice, by its philosophy and its fanaticism. Yonder is a rustic masquerade of Versailles, or a masked ball of the Palais-Royal. Here, Louis the Fourteenth and Fifteenth on their sad death-beds, Marat at the tribune, Marie Antoinette at the guillotine, Dufresny spending millions to cause roses to bloom, at the side of Fontenelle, who hoards his wit and his money; Piron, whom Rembrandt would have loved to paint, looking through the windows of a pothouse at Marivaux in a carriage going to have his portrait taken by La Tour. The Abbé Prévost passes with his dear Manon—the truest passion of the age—before Gentil-Bernard, who flutters from one amour to another. Voltaire laughs at everything, while Jean Jacques weeps over everything. Diderot builds his temple with herculean arms; Boufflers, with his “Queen of Golconda,” mocks the architect. Boucher divests painting of feeling, and Grétry finds it again in music. The King Louis XV. making pretty verses, in juxtaposition with the poet Bernis who governs France. Marie-Antoinette acts comedy at the Trianon, while Mademoiselle Clairon plays royalty at Paris.

Until now, historians have only seen kings and heroes in the history of a nation; poets and painters, who are intimately connected with, and who are most always the

glory and the joy of it, have been neglected, like barren weeds and flowers without perfume. History is a comedy, where everybody has a part : if the historian forgets a single actor, the piece is a failure. To forget the representatives of art, is it not to suppress the scenes where the sun shines, where the rose opens, where Nature chants her hymn of love ?

I shall, without doubt, be reproached for having studied with the same solicitude the works and life of the philosopher, of the poet, and of the painter. Until now, critics have studied the works more seriously than the life. It must be admitted, however, that the passions of all men poetically endowed, are still a study worthy of an enlightened curiosity. Is there not often more poetry to be gathered in the heart that beats, than in the book that rhymes ?

I gave myself up with passion to this study of man in the poet. I sought truth wherever it was to be found—less in books than in newspapers and pamphlets, less in pamphlets and newspapers than in printed and autograph letters. I put in operation another species of study : every time that I met in the world a man or a woman of the eighteenth century, I tried to read with open book their recollections. Thus I have put my hand upon the heart of the age ; I have reanimated the illustrious dead. By living familiarly with them, I have seen them in a musing or smiling mood : they have spoken to me as to an old friend.

There is to-day in France and Germany a new art, called *criticism*. The criticism of the last age was a cavilling old maid, who traduced the heart without ever having loved. She did not create ; she was contented to ana-

lyze grammar in hand, and saw no further than the book open beneath her eyes. To-day, criticism has become herself creative ; she has become enamored of the worship of ideas ; she stirs them up, and disseminates them. The book which she analyzes is now but the starting-point, for her domain is everywhere ; philosophy, art, science, poetry—her boundary is the infinite. Formerly, criticism was but the official report of the beauties and defects of a work : to-day, criticism is itself a work. It is great and generous ; such a book has become celebrated because it has been pleased to find in it, symbols and ideas which are not there. In France, the reviews have been the cradle of this style of criticism, it has grown up under strong and patient hands, become the safeguard of the French mind, and it can be said of it, that ‘ Criticism, the daughter of ancient literature, is the mother of the literatures to come.’

This book has been written little by little, and from time to time ; I was only guided by the ardor or the fantasy of the moment, becoming enamored at one time with a stern, then with a smiling physiognomy, but always with the idea of some day completing the gallery. It will be seen that I have not sided with any of the schools of literature or philosophy that have had a reputation in France.

The eighteenth century attracted me at an early age. How often have I imagined myself taking part in the love-adventures of the regency, in the literary debates of the *Café Procope*, in the pastorals of Versailles, in the carnival of wit and love, in the startling fame of the Encyclopædia, and in the heroic tragedy of the French Revolution, of which but one actor remained to lower the curtain !

We have worn out the Greeks and Romans, the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, the English and the German spirit : the eighteenth century has been unknown, or rather disavowed. I became enamored of this age of wit and gold. Poetry was there, as she is everywhere ; but literary loves pass like others : the mind goes from conquest to conquest, treasuring as a nucleus only its preferred recollections. The French Revolution has opened new bounds to thought ; and, while striving to be a faithful painter, I have always aimed to speak of the men of the eighteenth century with the feeling and ideas of my own age.

THE HISTORY OF THE
LIVES OF THE MOST EMINENT
MEN AND WOMEN
OF THE
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

DUFRESNY.

DUFRESNY introduces us gayly to the eighteenth century. Let us pass with a smile into this gallery of portraits, by turns gay and sad, representing, in all their shades and all their contrasts, the ideas, passions, and humors of the age of Voltaire and of Madame de Pompadour.

Dufresny is a poet in action, such as I love and you too love without doubt—one who takes a straight course to the ideal land of the poet, who is not turned aside by the deceitful seductions of the world, but gathers in passing through life all that the sage should gather—poetry and love—often seated beneath the vine-trellis, but rather to dream than to gather the grape.

This poet—always in love, notwithstanding his two wives and innumerable mistresses; always poor, in spite of the millions given him by Louis XIV.; always singing, even when in ill luck—was descended, in a more or less direct line, from a poor devil of a

Prince of Navarre, often in love, for a long time poor, always singing—in a word, from Henry IV.—and there have been poets of worse descent. He was the image of his great-grandfather and also of his great-grandmother, the pretty flower-girl of Anet, “the fairest rose of my garden,” as Henry IV. called her.

The genius of Art cradled the infancy of Dufresny. He came into the world at Paris in 1648, amidst the barricades of Cardinal de Rétz; he grew up during civil, foreign, and religious wars, but dwelt far from their noise and smoke, passing his tender youthful years in imprecations on books and schoolmasters, and in sunlight as well as starlight dreams. One fine morning wishing to hear nothing more of Greek and Latin, he ran away from school, took care to keep out of the way of his grandmother’s cottage, and threw himself head and heels upon the world. He was then between fifteen and sixteen. At that delightful age our feet are as those of the gazelle, our spirits as the birds, ever in search of spring. Be off, and a good journey to you! May God protect you, my child! Is not the road you travel with such happy thoughtlessness a good road? All roads lead to Rome, says the proverb, which means that all roads lead to something.

Toward evening, Dufresny *being very hungry, and not the less thirsty*, saw the pointed roofs and turrets of a chateau rising from a mass of foliage, at the termination of a valley which he had entered. “That’s my sleeping-place,” said he, with a humorous devil-may-care-air. He pushed on at a quickened pace, dis-regarding the attractions of the flowers and berries along his path, and the perfume of the ripened grapes.

the pure water of the brooks, and all "*l'hôtellerie champêtre*," as he styled it at a later period. A little before sunset he reached a light iron fence, through which was seen a small park, dotted here and there with elms and oaks. A gateway half covered by ivy, showing, in an archway surrounded with heavy scroll-work, some remains of Gothic tracery, rose on one side. One of the fronts of the chateau was seen through the trees, rising from the grass, already tinged with yellow. Far from being deserted, the chateau appeared to be the theatre of life and gayety. Fair forms were seen at the windows, and the tones of a violin melted away on the evening breeze. Our vagabond poet could not believe his eyes nor his ears. It was profound enchantment. There, on that sculptured balcony, a smiling woman; here, on these trees, a ray of sunlight—the smile of heaven, and the smile of earth; there gallant, idling grand seigneurs, abandoning the chase for the charms of love; here a shepherd humming the chorus of a peasant song. "What a concert, what a picture, a school in the open air!" exclaimed Dufresny; "this is the place for my studies; but meanwhile I am hungry." And he began to think sadly that he had no part in this festival of the world and nature; that a poor child like himself had as yet no position in the world; and, to sum up, that he must go to bed for that night supperless. And where was he to sleep, unless under the bright stars? His gayety vanished with the last ray of the sun; he half raised his eyes to a fallen image of the Virgin in the niche of the postern, and commenced praying with devotion to the holy mother of God.

He was interrupted in his prayer by the sound of the voice of two lovers, who were lovingly sauntering along a retired part of the park, partially obscured by the gathering twilight. He turned his head mechanically. "What are you doing there, my child?" said the gentleman, who had just perceived him. "Faith, sir," said the boy, without much hesitation, "I was praying for a supper; now, madame, has not my prayer been heard?"—"He is as beautiful as a Cupid, with his curling locks," said the lady, "we must receive him in the chateau. Come, Monsieur de Nangis, open the gate. I will help you."

The Marquis de Nangis obeyed with a smile. Scarcely had the gate moved, when Dufresny slipped through, like a bird, and threw himself at the lady's feet. He was taken to the chateau, and straight to the saloon where the women were toying, the men playing the butterfly, and the old people busy at ombre. "I have brought you a prodigal son, aunt," said the marquis, "a pretty schoolboy, who wants to go on his travels by himself."—"And in the meantime," said the fair protectress of Dufresny, "is playing truant."—"Where does this amiable vagabond come from?" said old Madame de la Roche Aymon, the mistress of the chateau.—"I come from Paris," answered Dufresny, timidly advancing.—"Where are you going?"—"I don't know."—"Your family?"—"The king of France is my cousin."—"Truly," said the marquis, with a burst of laughter.—"Yes," answered Dufresny, "and still better, we are said to resemble each other. One may resemble a more distant relation, for I am descended from Henry IV. by the grace of God, and the pretty flower-girl of Anet."

"Ah, ha! the young fool is joking. He has plenty of wit; he is a good-looking adventurer; we must make his fortune; I will present him at court; the king will give this new prince of the blood a good reception."—"At court," exclaimed Dufresny, "I know the road to it well, but it is not a very amusing place; my grandfather died there of ennui."—"His grandfather at court! what the devil did he do there?"—"Nothing much, I suppose, like a good many others. By-the-by, some charitable soul was talking of making my fortune, which is very lucky, but if meanwhile I had some supper—"

Everybody was charmed with Dufresny's nonchalance. "Truly," said one, "he has the manners of an independent gentleman."—"Faith," said another, "he plays the grand seigneur marvellously." Supper was served, Dufresny admitted to the foot of the table, and placed between a provincial pedant and a young abbot without an abbey. Although so indifferently located, he made innumerable sallies and was the true king of the table. But after supper his fortunes suddenly changed. There was more company at the chateau than usual, and not even a truckle-bed left for his royal highness Monseigneur Dufresny. A chambermaid, who interested herself in him, conducted him to a hayloft, regretting, though in a very low tone, that she could do no better for such a charming student. He forgot his titles to the crown of France and went to sleep like a lucky fellow.

He rose with the sun in the morning, descended from his apartment, and promenaded the park with great nonchalance. The Marquis de Nangis, in setting out for the chase, passed near him. "Monseigneur."

said the poet, "there is no common sense about your park, or rather there is too much. Now these paths laid out by rule are enough to kill one with ennui; these trimmed and snipt thickets are pitiable to look at; it is all pinned up like a country prude. I pity your taste. Trust me, the genius of a gardener inspires me. Besides, a good dog hunts according to his breed; my ancestors were the best gardeners of France and Navarre. Now, if you follow my advice, you will throw your terrace and park into a picturesque confusion: dig a fish-pond here, under your feet; pull down that stiff hedge yonder. I admire those rocks which you have taken so much pains to cover with earth, and that bit of broken wall, which your ninny of a gardener no doubt intends to rebuild and plaster over. In a word, monseigneur, Nature knows what she is about; she has her charming caprices and her fairy fantasies; let her act for herself a little."

Thus we see Dufresny received at the chateau like a spoiled child, careless of the future as of the past, abandoning himself to the luxuriant freedom of youth, amusing himself with the hounds as well as the huntsmen, with the scullions as well as the fine ladies, scarcely ever thinking of his poor grandmother, who was praying for him. But the fine company, which the hunting-season and the vintage had assembled at the chateau were about dispersing to the sumptuous hotels of Paris. What was to become of the vagabond poet, who had no hotel to go to? The Marquis of Nangis took pity upon him, conducted him straight to the court, and requested an audience of the young king. "Sire, you behold at your feet an illustrious

scion of the *pretty flower-girl of Anet*.”—“I understand,” said Louis XIV., “if our sacred religion has given us innumerable brothers, our grandsire Henry IV. has left us plenty of little cousins. This one seems to me to have a genteel, lively air, he is welcome; does he know anything?”—“How, sire! he is a youth of genius, sings like a bird, writes like a notary, has the best of ideas about gardens, without saying anything about Greek and Latin, which he has gone at tooth and nail. But these are matters I no longer care for.”—“If he sings so well,” said the king, “I will make him one of the valets of my wardrobe. He will amuse me better than that imbecile old Desnoyers, who can now scarcely tell one note from another.”—“And have all the gracefulness of a tiring-woman,” added the marquis.

Till now Dufresny had kept somewhat in the background. Louis XIV. beckoned him to advance in front of his arm-chair. “Your name?” demanded he.—“Some say Charles Rivière, others, Charles Dufresny; for my part, to accommodate both parties, I call myself Rivière or Dufresny, if it please your Majesty.”—“What is the name of your family?”—“One or the other, sire, but what difference does it make? Who in this world would dare to say with assurance, I know whence I came, I know whither I am going? Human vanity has worked away for a long time at genealogies; they are a kind of perspectives, whose beauty consists in displaying a long gallery of portraits, feebler in color, and more vague in design, the more distant they are placed. Besides, the point of observation, being almost always vague and undetermined, allows us to imagine that

we see faces in the distance which not even the eye of a lynx could discover. Those who wish to stretch beyond their eyesight, in their search after family, think they discover in the fogs of antiquity the figures of ancestors, of forms as symmetrical as if Michael Angelo himself had moulded them; but they see them only as the forms of men, horses, or spectres, are sometimes seen in the clouds.”—“Marvellous well!” said Louis XIV., “a capital lecture on blazonry, which would drive to despair many a one who pesters me with his vain titles.”—“Thus,” continued Dufresny, “it only depends upon myself to discover crowned heads in the distant fogs, but there is no trouble in that. What is more certain is, that I come in a straight line from God. I have that in common with plenty of others, who may seek something better if it amuses them.” Louis XIV. slightly bit his lip; he had really laid aside his majesty and pride for an instant, but these two pearls of the crown, as Benserade called them, suddenly reappeared in spite of himself. How could he, who called himself Louis XIV., not be irritated at such audacious words from a beggarly poet of some sixteen years? When one is king of France by the grace of God, how could the utterance of this bold truth be passed over without anger. Louis XIV. did not explode; he contented himself with a slight remonstrance, and installed the poet in his palace. “I’m a made man,” said Dufresny; “here is plenty of sunlight, a garden, fine clothes, good suppers, and nothing to do—God be praised, and long live the king!”

This course of life lasted for three years. The

poet expanded like a rose under morning breezes fragrant dews, and warm sun-beams. Dufresny, not Louis XIV., was king. But the war burst out, and it was necessary to go to the war. Louis XIV. had become so accustomed to see Dufresny's cheerful face at every step and at every moment, that he commanded him to depart in his suite for Flanders. The campaign was nothing more than a pleasure-tour. For the first time a king of France had carried with him all the pleasures of his palace, and still more, victory made one of the party. "This affair of the king's is decidedly not bad," said Dufresny, after the taking of Tournay. The courtiers did not witness these easy manners of Dufresny without vexation, but remembering that he was *a child of good family*, they did not dare to complain.

Dufresny followed the king at the siege of Lille to the breach, and donned helmet and cuirass himself. After Lille was taken there was a splendid supper. Dufresny was summoned at the dessert, and commanded to sing a hymn of victory. Dufresny, like a spirited fellow, understood song-writing much better. Much they thought, too, by that time, of the siege of Lille; there had already been, since the action, too many bottles emptied and heads fuddled for that! Dufresny bowed gracefully to the king, and sang his pretty harvest-song to an air composed by himself. Here is the first verse:—

'To the vines of Claudine
All the vintagers go.
You can tell by their mien
Who will gather or no.

To those who are best
All gladly give place;
Gleanings fall to the rest
Who follow their trace."

There were plaudits for the song, the music, and the singer. More than one seignor, more than one hero of the previous day, envied Dufresny's gay triumph; for at the trenches there was only the king to applaud deeds of valor; but at the supper, besides the king, there were fair dames who bestowed on the poet their sweetest glances. "Who is this pretty boy?" said one of these ladies to Vauban. "This pretty boy, madame, is the king's fool," the grave soldier answered. Louis XIV. heard him, and condescended to turn toward Dufresny and say: "Vauban has hit it; always remember, Charlot, you are the king's fool. One fool is not too many among so many sages." Every one bowed except Turenne, who was already conquering Flanders in imagination.

The king returned to Paris, where fêtes and benedictions awaited him. The court passed the winter at St. Germain, in ceaselessly renewed pleasures. One evening, at the time of opening the theatre, the king, somewhat weary of music, dance, comedies, and mistresses, asked for Dufresny. They hunted for him everywhere; at last the king himself discovered him on the stage, playing a rascally valet in one of Molière's comedies, in capital style.

Dufresny returned to the seat of war at the end of March; he was present at the conquest of Holland; crossed the Rhine in the king's suite, *without wetting his feet*; and led the errant life of a soldier, without

other arms than his gayety and wit. Poet as he was, he faced danger well. At the passage of the Rhine, or rather after the passage, he received a sabre-cut in the hand. When Boileau presented the *Passage of the Rhine* to the king, Dufresny was present in the hall of audience. After Boileau left, he read this fine poetical fiction himself. "I don't recollect this," said he, interrupting himself at the end of every verse. "Does M. Despréaux imagine that we passed through the infernal regions, or rather the Styx?"—"Be off," said the king, with some pettishness; "it is only the poets who understand how to write the history of kings."

But Dufresny was not a poet born for a court. "Cultivating roses, marking out paths, planting hedges, is the same as writing sonnets, songs, and poems," he often said; "if a laborer writes prose in the book of Nature, a gardener writes verse." Our English gardens come to us, not from England but from Dufresny. In architecture and landscape-gardening he was an excellent master. In the eighteenth century nothing was more common than to hear a picturesque garden or handsome country-seat described as *à la Dufresny*. The most lovely retreats in the neighborhood of Paris were planned or embellished after his recommendations. He insisted that Versailles should be made "*a garden of caprices*." Louis XIV. ordered designs from Dufresny; the poet planned magnificent gardens, in which all the promenaders would lose themselves. The Chinese never imagined anything so *grandiose* and poetically wild. The king, fearing to sink too much money by Dufresny's operations, shelved the

plans but not their author, who was appointed inspector of gardens.

Dufresny was thirty years old when he married. Scarcely anything is known of his first wife, who, according to Voisenon, was a comfortably-off city dame, who captivated the poet by a large garden in the faubourg St. Antoine. Thanks to his marriage, he had a garden to cultivate to his liking. "Well, my poor Charlot," the king said to him a month after the wedding, "what do you think of marriage?"—"Alas, sire, this land of marriage is one which foreigners have a great desire to inhabit, while the native inhabitants would gladly be exiled from it; or rather it is a community of goods in which there is nothing good in common at the end of eight days."—"One thing will not be common in your mansion, that is, money. During these past few years I have given you more than a hundred thousand crowns; you really throw money out of the windows."—"It is gone before I have time to open the windows. It costs money, sire, to live at court."—"You rascal, I should like to know how much you pay for bed and board here!"—"Alas, sire, I dine out and sleep out so often."—"Ah, ha! then the secret is out—so you stay at the palace when you can find nothing more amusing in Paris—you are an ingrate!"—"I am well aware of it, sire, so I entreat your majesty to turn me out of doors. A poet ought to put some bounds to his horizon; and besides, thanks to my wife, I am not now in a good humor every day."—"But who is there who will give me a good hearty laugh?" the king pensively interrupted.—"Your reflection, sire, reminds me of a pleasant Arabian

tale, which I will relate with your permission.”—“Let me hear it,” said the king; “but make haste, for they are waiting for me.”

THE CROWS.

The caliph Haroun had two physicians, one for his body, the other for his mind; his mind was sick with sadness, so that the second physician was a philosopher, who passed all his time in endeavoring to enliven the caliph. One day while they were walking together in the palace-gardens, the caliph exclaimed, “Oh Haroun, Haroun, you sadden your friends by your gloom, as yon branching tree saddens the neighboring trees by its shade. I promise you a ring,” turning to the philosopher, “for every time that you make me laugh.” The philosopher forthwith began to narrate comic and burlesque stories about widows, but he narrated in vain. He already despaired of himself as of the caliph, when a flock of crows alighted on the tree. “Yesterday,” continued the philosopher, “these crows gave a great deal of trouble to a dreamy poet who, seeing this cloud of sad-colored birds blackening the flowers and fruits of such a beautiful tree, forgot that its trunk was as thick as a tower, and in the impulse of the moment began shaking as if it was a sapling. The account which I have given you of it is not laughable, but on seeing the thing myself I could not help laughing.”—“If I had seen it I think that I should have laughed as you did,” said the caliph.—“Well,” answered the philosopher, with a triumphant air, “you ought to laugh too, in seeing me all in a passion with trying by shakings of pleasantry to chase away these

black crows, that is to say, these cares and sorrows from your brain."—"You have won the ring, there it is," cried the caliph.

"And I, sire," said Dufresny, after a pause, "have I won leave of absence?"—"Yes," answered the king, sadly, "be off; but remember me when you have no money left. I hope in that way to see you often. Adieu, I love you in spite of your vices. It is superfluous to say that you are a charming poet, the other poets are mere pedants, except Molière, who is almost as good as you are. Adieu, my brave Charlot; I am very sorry I have nothing to give you to-day, for you have told me a very beautiful story—the branching tree on which the black crows alighted, alas! is the king. Let us see, what can I give you?"—"Ah, sire, is it not enough for to-day to have given me the key of the fields?" Thereupon Dufresny bowed, kissed the king's hand, and left without delay. Did this philosophic dreamer—who for the sake of liberty turned his back with such good will on the silk and gold, the fêtes and pleasures of the most splendid court in the world—make Louis XIV. think? Did he not envy a little that humble poet who had not a crown of care and inquietude eternally pressing on his brow?

Once installed in his wife's house, Dufresny quickly commenced ruining himself by his seigniorial prodigalities. He lost no time in the work. He commenced with masons and gardeners; he built a mansion, or rather a palace; he realized the enchanting gardens of his dreams, after which he gave splendid suppers to which the fashionable, but espe-

cially the theatrical world, was invited. Visé reports that he met one evening more than fifty actresses at one of Dufresny's suppers. His wife, who had no taste for these prodigalities, in vain endeavored to hold on to her money with both hands, but she at last revenged herself on Dufresny's follies in a manner usual with dames in those days. She was not handsome, according to Voisenon, her gallant was. It is to Dufresny that we owe the clever saying, "*The favor was all on your side, sir.*"

She died, it is not known how or why. Her husband's sorrow exhaled in a bacchanalian song. A notary came to make an inventory. "There is nothing for you to do here," said Dufresny to him. "But, monsieur, at the dissolution of the joint possession of the fortune which"—"Say rather of the misfortune—that affair produced nothing good unless you call debts good—is it worth while to inventory my debts?"—"But, monsieur, your two children?"—"That concerns Heaven—their grandmother, who has got nothing to do, has promised me to educate them."—"But, after all, monsieur, the law has its claims—a small inventory." Dufresny seized his hat, took to his heels, and never reappeared in the house.

He went the same day to St. Germain, and succeeded in seeing the king. "Well, Dufresny, how do your gardens flourish?"—"Ah, sire, their paths are not always strewed with roses—I have counted my chickens before they were hatched. My wife is dead; I have abandoned my house to the notary; I have nothing left, not even my gayety. But the thing which makes me saddest is that I just now spoke

harshly to a beggar, who asked alms at the entrance to the palace."—"Come," said Louis XIV., "let us hear; you must hit on some drollery." Dufresny put his hand to his forehead like a man trying to recollect himself. "The poor devil," he continued, "followed me and said, '*Poverty is not a crime.*' It is much worse, I answered him."—"I am always sorry for your misfortunes, you prodigal fellow," said the king. "Come, speak."—"I only ask your majesty a small corner of ground at the end of the lawn at Vincennes; it has capabilities for a magnificent garden, in my style."—"A garden? you are a fool. Do you want it to display your poverty?"—"I shall never be poor while I have a garden; it is my throne, sire. I find there the green vine-tendrils or the roses for my crown."—"Be it as you will," said the king; "come back the day after to-morrow, and we shall have the papers signed."

Dufresny went, to sleep where he could. The next day he presented himself to Regnard, who had made one at his suppers. Regnard wishing to repair the breaches in his fortune by means of the stage; confided his plan to Dufresny, who wished to take an even share in the venture. But the day after, our poet having received from Louis XIV. a purse containing a hundred louis, the grant of half an acre of the lawn at Vincennes, and the monopoly of the manufactory of looking-glass, he abandoned the theatre till further orders from his evil fortunes. As it was in spring, he hastened to sow his hundred louis in his garden. From such good seeds he harvested a few puffs of perfumed air.

Winter having arrived, it was time to call on his

friend Regnard. The monopoly of the new manufacture of mirrors was nothing less than a fortune for life, but it was slow in coming, as the early disbursements exceeded the receipts. Dufresny went to the contractors, spoke to them about his disgust for business affairs, and offered them his privilege for twelve thousand livres, that is to say, about enough to support him during the winter according to his mode of life. The monopoly was worth a hundred thousand livres, so the contractors quickly offered him six thousand. To a poet who lives from day to day, like a careless grasshopper, a little ready money is a fortune. Dufresny signed a transfer. The same day he met Regnard. "Well," said the traveller to him, "I have not seen you for a long time, where have you been? All Paris has been calling for you." "I have been living at my garden all summer, with my roses and marjoram, my grapes and gooseberries."—"And our comedies?"—"I have not thought about them; but I have imagined verdant prospects which are real terrestrial paradises."—"Well, thank heaven, winter has come, with his powdered wig; gardens are no longer in season, and willing or not, you must compose some comedies with me for the Théâtre-Italien."—"As you please; I am on my way to pay a rogue at Vincennes, who lodged me tolerably during the summer. After my return, I will put my wits at your disposal."—"So you pay your debts?"—"The small ones only; as for the great ones I content myself with paying the interest to the poor."

The same evening Dufresny took apartments near Regnard's. They were two gay philosophers, loving-

ly receiving the happy hours as they came from the hand of Heaven, careless of the future as of the past, squeezing the present with all their strength, seizing with ardor all the pleasures of the passing day; the rays of sunlight, the mistress who comes without ceremony, the mouldy flask, the gayety of friends, the song at supper; those who choose like Regnard and Dufresny may find a thousand pleasures in the compass of a day. Our two philosophers had studied the world well; one in adventurous travel, the other at the court; they had sounded all the weaknesses of the heart, all the absurdities of intellect to their very depths. Regnard, who had stood the brunt of adversity, had the hardest mind. Dufresny, more dazzled by the splendor of the world, had more fire of intellect; the first designed noble outlines like a pupil of Molière, the second added a thousand brilliant ornaments to the sketch. "Regnard is a laborer, I am only a gardener," said Dufresny. It was a simile as true as it was ingenious. He made his *début* with Regnard in "*Les Chinois*" After breakfast Regnard took his pen and *traced the path*; Dufresny was good only for his sallies of broad humor. Each one brought him but one pistole. Louis XIV. paid better, but then Louis XIV. did not always take the joke. These joint comedies were soon produced by the Italian buffoons with side-splitting success. The two poets afterward composed, always working after breakfast and in the same style, *La Foire de St. Germain*, and *Les Momies d'Egypte*. Regnard finished by paying Dufresny in cash (ready money for ready jokes). This mode of payment sharpened Dufresny's intel-

lect; in our day we have Dufresnys by the dozen, minus the wit.

The poet, at last finding that Regnard was enriching himself while he was exhausting his resources, returned to his gardens. The swallows had returned, and he again cultivated his well-beloved roses without troubling himself about harvest-time. This season his garden at Vincennes was a miniature masterpiece of art and nature; but one evening while he was revelling in the intoxicating perfume of his flowers, he remembered that he had not the wherewithal to pay for his supper. At that moment a large stone of the great wall of the park, which was partly in ruins, fell at his feet. "Well," said he, "if that stone had fallen on the other side, it would have crushed some passer-by;" and in his zeal for humanity he summoned a laborer and ordered him to tear down the broken wall forthwith. In a few days he sold twenty cart-loads of handsome stone to his neighbors. If he had been left alone he would have torn down all the walls of the park; but the governor, being at last advised of the proceeding, begged him to set some limits to his zeal for humanity.

I have forgotten to tell you that Dufresny had among his bad habits, a passion for gambling. He found in his head one morning, when he least expected it, a veritable comedy, almost self-made, thanks to his recollection of some scenes in which he had been an actor. Although he owed Regnard a grudge, he went in his first glow of enthusiasm and recited his comedy to him, scene by scene, and word for word. Regnard pretended that he did not understand it, and begged his old friend to write out the piece, and

intrust him with the manuscript. Dufresny did so. Regnard promised to point out its faults, though he had a great many other things to attend to, he said. For six months he kept Dufresny dancing attendance, answering the poor poet's complaint now and then by a good supper. At last Regnard returned the MS., decorated with a great number of crosses. "So you take my comedy for a cemetery," said Dufresny. He set to work again: this time he was enthusiastic about his work; but alas! the fatal hour had struck—his good star had faded! It was of no use. Fortune is fickle, he had wearied her too long, she had fled for ever, leaving but a cloud of golden dust in her course. It was in vain that he pursued her with his cries and tears, misfortune alone responded to them; it was in vain that he stretched out his failing hand toward her with repentance; a dry and icy hand, the hand of misery, came to lean upon his. He offered "*Le Chevalier joueur*" to the Comédie Française, it was put in rehearsal the same day. That night the poet could not sleep; happiest hopes fluttered over his humble lodging-house bed; he saw not, like many others, castles in the air, but his gardens, the oases of his life, again in bloom. But a few days after the leaves dropped from all his roses. Passing by the Comédie Française, about eight o'clock one evening, he met Gacon, who asked him if he had come to see *Le Joueur* of Regnard. "*Le Joueur* of Regnard?" exclaimed Dufresny. "Yes," returned Gacon, "they are just commencing it." A flash of light passed through Dufresny's mind; he entered the theatre with indignation, he looked on at the most lamentable of spectacles, he

saw *Le Joueur* which he had created represented, everybody applauded, the name of the author was saluted with enthusiasm, but the name was that of Regnard. "After all," said poor Dufresny, when his choler was a little appeased, "ideas are the property of the whole world : Regnard has followed Molière, who took as he could find. I wrote my piece as fast as the pen could move, he has turned my prose into verse. Thus is a masterpiece fabricated."

This adventure caused scandal. Dufresny openly accused Regnard. The comedians, in order to keep Parisian curiosity in suspense, announced that they would shortly produce *Le Joueur* of Dufresny. At the end of two months it was produced. Regnard is accused of theft in the prologue, in which he figured as an unbounded plagiarist from his old friend. Among the thousand epigrams launched against the two poets, that of Gacon's was especially commended. This sharpener of epigrams said that Dufresny and Regnard invented *Le Joueur* between them, so that

Each boldly pilfered from his friend,
But Regnard had the greatest skill,
And proved the best thief in the end.

At first Dufresny was the most blamed, but by degrees the truth was acknowledged by all fair-minded men. It has been said by a critic: "Dufresny must be believed : if he had been a plagiarist, he would not have dared to produce, in a theatre still resounding with the plaudits bestowed on that of Regnard, a comedy heralded by a thousand unfavorable prepossessions, and deprived

of the brilliant prestige of versification, with which his rival's was embellished ; but Dufresny, the true father of '*Le Joueur*,' enamored with the form which his piece had received from his hands at its creation, exasperated against his faithless friend, trusting more to his just rights than was proper in a cause where entertainment was the judge, acted with all the imprudence and ill-fortune of sincerity." The best argument in favor of Dufresny is, that Regnard had bought from him for a hundred crowns that pleasant comedy, "*Attendez-moi sous l'orme*." But in this case it was a regular bargain ; Dufresny had no more idea of reclaiming it than if he had sold an old coat.

He hobbled back again toward the Comédie Italienne, and associated himself with Biancoletti, son of the famous Dominique. They wrote together the "*Contes de ma mère l'Oie*" (Mother Goose's Tales), a piece of buffoonery which supplied our poor poet with bread, nothing more. Louis XIV. had at last lost patience with Dufresny's mode of life ; he gave less and less frequent answers to his petitions, saying to those who wished to plead for him, "I am not potent enough to enrich Dufresny." Thus abandoned by the king, without family, without a home, it was a sad sight to see the miserable plight to which he was reduced. Where were the fine laces of his linen, his sparkling jewels, his gold shoe-buckles, the plumes of his beaver—what had become of the magnificent attire suitable to a man who had squandered over half a million ? He was not yet old, but in spite of his natural coquettishness he had perforce to submit to sorry accoutrements.

He was soon so shabby and threadbare, that one day on presenting himself at the Louvre to see the king, he was repulsed in broad daylight by the guard.

It was doubtless about this time, that seeing Louis XIV. passing in his carriage and saluting the crowd, he threw his hat under the horses' feet, and stretched out his hands in desperation. The horses stopped, but what a stroke of ill-fortune!—The king saw in Dufresny only a beggar, and threw a crown of six livres to him from the window. The poor poet took to his heels with his utmost speed, as if to escape from his shame, and ran no one knew whither, to weep with shame and anger. Certes, had suicide then been in vogue, Dufresny would have hung himself, for how could he continue his journey on so bad a road, when life had naught but flints to scatter beneath his feet, and the portal of the other world can be opened so easily. But in those days men lived as long as it pleased Heaven; they trudged patiently through all the merry ways of life, calling into requisition, in default of heroism in bearing calamity, a little of that good old philosophy which then formed the life of the nation. So do not pity Dufresny too much. He only is to be pitied who, having exhausted all the favors of fortune, has no other resource left but to don the livery of wretchedness on the decline of youth, when the imagination is naught but a devastated plain, scarcely animated here and there by the fall of a leaf or the cry of a bird taking wing. Do not pity Dufresny. I tell you, he will take refuge in the past, or still better, will amuse himself with the present, as with a comedy of a thousand varied scenes. Besides, let fortune do

her worst, she can not deprive him of his little garden-plot at Vincennes, when the pleasant season returns, and the roses bloom again. Perhaps you think that Dufresny went and bemoaned himself in a long elegiac? Do not be deceived. He cried heartily, but could not restrain a smile amidst his tears. "My poor hat lost! that is all I have gained by that silly business. I ought to have picked up the money, and making myself known to Louis XIV., said to him, 'What would you have Dufresny do with this?' The king would have taken back his alms, and I should have had no weight upon my heart."

Dufresny returned to his lodging, thinking that a wife, the first he could get, would be a treasure to him in his misery. With a wife he would be sure of a home and of bread without anxiety; he had his days of ennui, a wife would make them pass pleasantly. A letter from Biancoletti came to dissipate this odd revery. Biancoletti invoked a little of his humor for the finishing touch to a piece he had in hand. Dufresny mended his pen, and sat down to answer the letter. He had not written three lines, when a woman, without any previous notice, walked into his room. "Alas!" said he, "people formerly took the trouble to wait in the antechamber; here is the inconvenience of being no longer a fine gentleman, and particularly of not having an antechamber." The woman, who had heard Dufresny's remark, very coolly said to him, "I went through all your other rooms without meeting a single valet, otherwise I should have had myself announced." Dufresny recognising the voice, turned with a merry smile,

“Ah, is it you, Angélique? I am glad of it. I was waiting with impatience for my ruffles.”—“That is all very well, Monsieur Dufresny; but you have had no ruffles in the wash this long time.”

This woman was Dufresny’s washerwoman, a large girl, pleasant and fair-complexioned, and dressed coquettishly. “Do you know, Angélique,” continued the poet, in resuming his letter, “that you are a very pretty girl?”—“That is possible, Monsieur Dufresny; but I am not to be paid with that kind of money to-day. You have owed me eighty livres this long time. I beg you to remember me, for I am going to be married.”—“How is that! you are going to be married!” cried Dufresny, suddenly starting from his chair.—“And why not, if you please? Am I not old enough?”

Dufresny had become thoughtful.—“With whom and with what?”—“With a valet-de-chambre of the Duc d’Harcourt, and with twelve hundred livres which come to me from my family.”—“The dence! the miserable fellow is not to be pitied; a good match in faith! Has anything yet——” —“What do you take me for, Monsieur Dufresny?”—“For a fine girl who desires only to become a fine wife.”—“That is all very well, Monsieur Dufresny, but you are making me lose my time with all your fine talk. Come, be kind enough to settle our little bill.”—“I have a horror of figures. See here: to finish this matter, I will marry you and we shall be quits.”—“You are joking! A gentleman—If I take you at your word——” —“That is what I wish. But what will your other friend say?”—“Say no more about him.”—“Are you sure he has had nothing on

account from your twelve hundred livres or from yourself?"—"I should have liked to have seen him try it! It is only to you that people give anything on account."—"Well, embrace me, and let us be off to the next tavern. What a pretty wife I am going to have! By-the-by, have you a little money about you?"—"Do you know that you do me a great deal of honor? A man of your rank and of your talents to marry a poor girl incapable of playing the part of a duchess."—"It is you who will be the dupe; look at the matter twice; see to what a state I have arrived with all my talent and my forty-five years."—Angélique weeping embraced him. "To-morrow," said she, with charming naiveté, "I will make you look as well as I have seen you formerly. But, first and foremost, you must ask me in marriage of my aunt Durand, for form's sake: it is not far—*quai des Tournelles*. She is a good woman, and besides she keeps my money for me."—"Let us go instant; we should never put off anything to the morrow. If you will take my advice, we will afterward say a short prayer together at Notre-Dame, and it will be all over."—"So this is the style in which you wish to marry me! Thank heaven, I do not agree with you!"—"Oh, I am willing to marry you in any style you wish. I will not even object to the marriage contract, though all these things are superfluous."

Three weeks afterward the marriage took place rather privately. Such was the manner in which Dufresny married his washerwoman. Nothing was ever more reasonable or more natural than this marriage, which caused so much scandal. But what mattered the vain satires of the world to Dufresny?

He had a young and handsome wife who loved him, so he said those who pitied him were jealous.

Le Sage thus relates this singular adventure in the tenth chapter of his "Devil upon Two Sticks." The devil is showing Cleophas the people who should be put in the madhouse. "I also wish to send there," says he, "an old fellow *of good family*, who no sooner gets a ducat than he spends it; and who, not being able to exist without money, is capable of doing anything to obtain it. Fifteen days ago, his washerwoman, to whom he owed thirty pistoles, came to ask him for them, saying that she needed them, as she was going to marry a valet-de-chambre who had proposed to her.—'You have other money, then,' said he to her, 'for where the plague can you find a valet-de-chambre willing to become your husband for thirty pistoles?'—'Eh? but,' answered she, 'I have two hundred ducats besides that.'—'Two hundred ducats,' replied he with emotion; 'the devil! you have only to give them to me; I will marry you, and we will be quits.' He was taken at his word, and his washerwoman has become his wife."

The news of this marriage was soon extended far and wide, thanks to a bon-mot of the abbé Pellegrin, who had been present at the celebration. Dufresny, some days after, rallied him at Visé's for always wearing dirty linen; the abbé, piqued at this, retorted that everybody was not fortunate enough to marry a washerwoman.

Out of love to his wife, Dufresny set to work again with ardor. He wrote a dozen buffooneries, one after the other, for the Italiens, and three or four comedies for the Théâtre Français. The harvest was good

during the early years, but unfortunately as soon as he found he had enough to support himself for a season, he dropped the pen and took up the watering-pot, returned to his fatal garden at Vincennes, and did not leave it until all his resources were exhausted. He had no longer much enthusiasm for the stage, which had returned him but small gains, and began to despair, when Louis XIV. again thought of him. The patent for the looking-glass manufactory had expired; in signing a renewal of it, the king had stipulated that the contractors should pay Dufresny an annual pension of three thousand livres. The poet, therefore, received one morning the title to this pension; but how could he wait six months before receiving the first instalment? Six months to Dufresny! It seemed like the end of the world. The contractors were accommodating people; he paid them a second visit. "I shall live fifty years," he told them; "but if you will pay me for five years in advance, I will give you a full acquittance." They debated a long time; the contractors talked a great deal about the chances of death; but after two contracts guarantying them, Dufresny returned, all in a perspiration, with ten thousand livres in gold. He spread them out on the table with the joy of an infant, and embraced his wife, who from weeping from misery wept for joy.

The next day he reattired his wife from head to foot, bought himself fifty pairs of ruffles, hired three sets of apartments at the same time, to dissipate the blue devils which tormented him; in fine, took rapid strides again down the road of ruin, in spite of his wife, who restrained him

with both hands. In less than a year he fell into profound wretchedness. At the death of Visé he addressed a petition to Louis XIV. for the exclusive privilege of the publication of the *Mercury*:—

May it please you, sire, my privilege to renew,
And grant my patent-right to cheer and gladden you.

He obtained it, and thus commenced his duties:—

“Mercury flies with outspread wings,
To search me out, through all the universe,
The cleverest jokes and newest things
Both true and false, as well in prose as verse;
From which I'll choose, seeking Minerva's aid,
But vain I call the blue-eyed maid,
She'll not to me incline,
I can not hope that fire divine,
Save from the god of wine.

After this preface he composed tales of the school of Le Sage, and some very weak criticisms, but among them a very curious and original parallel between Homer and Rabelais. After all, he was more of a poet than a journalist and was unable to be humorous and sensible at fixed hours. In his hands the *Mercury* ran great risk of appearing only once in six weeks. At first, thanks to the solicitude of his wife, everything went on in the best possible manner, but his wife having died during the second year, he got tired of his journal, and sold the privilege of publication. The death of his wife, as he has said, brought the autumn of his life to winter; he regretted until the day of his death, the sad but happy hours passed beside his dear, ruddy, mild Angélique.

From 1715 to 1719, Dufresny lived no one knows where or how; it is thought that he passed his time in the suburbs of Paris, in the suite of some nobleman directing masons and gardeners; perhaps he retired silently on the pittance produced by the sale of the *Mercury*, weeping for his wife, and cultivating his roses at Vincennes. It is certain, however, that at the period of Law's scheme, he found himself in such distress that he presented this strange petition to the Duke of Orleans: "It is needful for your glory, monseigneur, to leave Dufresny in his extreme poverty, so that at least one man may remain in a situation, which will remind men that the whole kingdom, before you lent yourself to its aid, was as poor as Dufresny." The regent wrote *naught* at the foot of the petition, and sent an order to Law to pay two hundred thousand livres to Dufresny: he knew that the poet belonged to the family. Dufresny hastened to spend the money. He built a fine mansion in the faubourg St. Antoine, which he called the House of Pliny. For the first time in his life he spent his money at the proper time, for the two hundred thousand livres were in bank-notes. Six months later he would have suffered in Law's bankruptcy; but Dufresny was not such a fool as to keep his bank-notes in his pocket.

He died in 1724, aged seventy-five, calmly, like a man who has nothing more to do in this world. In his latter days he saw his children again, who had become zealous devotees: to please them he burnt a large manuscript, containing four comedies, the continuation of the "*Amusements comiques et sérieux*," tales, songs, and memoirs. Heaven forgive

his children, for Dufresny reduced to ashes much wit and gayety. He died in the autumn, like a good poet and a good Christian. He saw his garden from his bed; his last glance passed over the flowers as they faded, and was lost in the azure heaven with his soul.

I have seen his portrait by Coypel. It represents a man of sixty years, but still fresh and sprightly. His charming head is buried in a forest of hair, his smile is marked by intelligence and good humor, the most beautiful smile in the world. His dear Angelique, the washerwoman, has not forgotten his shirt-frill and ruffles. His hand is ornamented with a diamond, and what is still better, with an impatient pen whose point is far from being blunted. The attributes of science are represented as his armorial bearings. And, in reality, was not this man, though he never opened a book, a *savant* in action? He had studied love in his heart, grandeur at the court, war upon the field of battle, architecture in the erection of buildings, nature in his garden, poetry and music in song. Thus Dufresny's science did not depend upon books; she dropped her dreamy head, and seemed lost in recollection. Dufresny's works form seven volumes, without including his "Théâtre Bouffon," which is full of humorous passages. His tales, which are those of a philosopher, are written with too much carelessness. Dufresny thought rather than wrote. His comedies, always original, are formed a little on the model of his life, no logic in the intrigue, but wit of the true stamp, graceful satire, a charming disorder, all goes by hazard as in the actual comedy of human life. Thus

in the limited horizon of the theatre where so much art is needed to group the scenes harmoniously around the idea to be expressed, the incurbed comedies of Dufresny were not always well received. More than one pleasant scene produced a smile, more than one charming *bon-mot* passed from mouth to mouth, but that was often the limit of their success. If you want to see Dufresny's work par excellence, you must consult "*Les Amusements comiques et sérieux*," which is the work in which he displays his originality without restraint. Each page of this little volume contains some good sentiment on human philosophy. It is the book of a thinker, who expresses himself as a wit. We listen gayly to him in this treatise, which is serious only in its satire. "I have given to the ideas which have come into my head the name of *Amusements*; they will be grave or gay according to the humor I am in while writing them, or the humor you are in while reading them." This satire is, as you know, a journey through Paris. Dufresny departs for this still unknown country with a native of Siam, "whose bizarre and figurative ideas" contrast at every step with his own and sharpen his wit. Thus at the Tuileries, the Siamese exclaims at the sight of its charming promenaders: "Oh, the beautiful aviary! oh, what charming birds!"—"They are," says Dufresny, following out the same idea, "amusing birds who change their plumage two or three times a day—volatile by inclination, feeble by nature, gay in plumage, they see the dawn only at sunset, walking with their feet raised a foot from the ground, touching the clouds with their superb tufts.

In a word, most women are peacocks at the promenade, magpies in domestic life, doves in a tête-à-tête. There are also various nations among these promenaders—the polished nation of the fashionable ladies, the savage one of the provincials, the free one of the coquettes, the unconquerable one of the faithful, the docile one of the unfaithful, the wandering one of the gypsies.” He continues thus: “We have two sorts of promenades at Paris, the one, people frequent to see and to be seen, the other, neither to see nor to be seen by anybody. Ladies inclined to solitude voluntarily seek the by-paths of the *Bois de Boulogne*, where they serve as mutual guides to lose one another.” Montesquieu found in this book not merely the *idea*, but the *ideas*, too, of the Persian Letters. Dufresny contented himself with a rapid tour. Montesquieu followed with a slowness of reflection in the poet’s footsteps.

With a little less of that inaction which forms the charms of the happy hours of his life, and a little less of poetry in action, Dufresny, with his happy endowments, would have ranked among the great poets. At least he is among those whom Fame does not dare to place in the inferior ranks; he stands by himself, neither small nor large, charming: and that is all. With fewer certain resources, but more patience and study, many secondary writers appear to have surpassed him. Had Montesquieu, who drew his first book from a work of Dufresny’s, his exquisite talent? With Montesquieu, patience was everything; his was the genius of reflection. It was not until he was thirty-two years old—rich, noble—his name well known in the fashionable

world, that he ventured upon his first work ; the easy success of the Persian Letters conducted its author to the Academy forthwith, while Dufresny died in oblivion.

Dufresny was always singing while cultivating his roses, improvising both words and music, but like a true poet who detests books, he never preserved either the words or the music : words and music passed away with the wind. An echo, preserved by chance, is all that has come down to us of his many songs. There is a truly Gallic turn in his musical philosophy, as in *Les Lendemain*s, *Les Cloches*, and *La Chanson des Vendanges*.

The same books are continually reprinted, but they are little read, or they are not read at all : the master-pieces of a nation are in the minds of every one, they are known before they are read. A celebrated book is a tradition spread from mouth to mouth—it is a museum whence all the painters have taken a picture. I know all the *Nouvelle Héloïse* by heart, though it is chance whether I have ever, during a studious or an idle day, read twenty pages of it. The books to reprint are the unknown books, many of which are delightful. What an attractive volume could be made from Dufresny's seven—two comedies, two tales, four songs, *Les Amusements comiques et sérieux*. Thus composed it would be one of the most pleasing volumes in French literature.

I wished, as a good historiographer, to hear some of Dufresny's music. A violoncellist played for me, with much disdain, some of the old naive and simple airs. It is almost the music of Jean Jacques—

it has the same languishing sweetness. Good music for a solitary valley, but too quiet for Paris.

Dufresny is a poet rather by his life than by his writings. He is the traveller who has not had time to write out his journal amidst the confusion of his adventures. Here and there, however, on meeting with a fair landscape, he has jotted down in passing some expression, charming in thought and feeling. But, most often, when his adventurous voyage left him an hour of repose, he hid himself in his garden and cultivated his roses; it was the sole labor he recognised. How many flowers of eloquence and of poetry, famous in their day, have had neither the reputation, the perfume, nor the permanence of the roses of Dufresny!

FONTENELLE.

A VERY curious spectacle was presented on the 7th of February, 1755, at the hotel of Helvetius. Madame Helvetius, who was not a philosopher, thanks to her beautiful eyes, inaugurated the festivities of the carnival by a magnificent ball to which all who were distinguished in Paris for brilliancy of wit, beauty, or grace, were invited. It was a charming world, bad catholic but good Christian, sinning in broad daylight, but giving alms in the shade, already laughing at titles of nobility as at titles ecclesiastic, calling Richelieu the Grand Duke of the Boudoir, and Voisenon, the Archbishop of the *Comedie-Italienne*.

The curious spectacle at the ball of Madame Helvetius, on the 7th of February, 1755, was not owing to the scandal caused by the amours of Grimm and Madame d'Epinay, at the expense of Jean Jacques Rousseau, but to the opening of the ball by an old poet with Mademoiselle Helvetius. This old poet, surnamed the old shepherd, was M. de Fontenelle; then more than ninety-eight years old. As for his partner, Mademoiselle Helvetius, she was only a year-and-a-half.

This evening he kept them waiting a little for him. "So much the worse; we will wait," said Madame Helvetius.—"It is coquetry," said Madame d'Epinay.—"I am very sure," said Monterif, "that he will make his appearance covered with all the gewgaws of frivolity."—"You see I was right when I wrote 'The style is the man,'" said M. de Buffon, smoothing his ruffles.—"You are mischievous, Monsieur de Buffon," said Madame d'Angeville, with a charming little curl of the lip; "since they have gone so far as to style M. de Fontenelle the old shepherd, because he has a little that is simple and unaffected in him."—"If it were so, madame," said Duclos, with none too much gallantry, "he could have retained his real name, Le Bouvier [the cowherd], which certainly does very well. With a name like that he could have made good and unaffected eclogues which smelt of the grass of the fields; but when one is called Fontenelle, he is nothing more than a little fountain, pattering on the stones with a petty monotonous murmur; still an eclogue, if you will, but what an eclogue! All this may be said without injury to the genius of M. de Fontenelle."

Monterif, a disciple of Fontenelle, took up the conversation. "In faith," said he, "I think that M. Duclos regards the eclogue in much the same light as the old abbé Delarue, who naïvely takes the cows to water in a stanza."—"And why not?" exclaimed Duclos; "it is a great fault, truly, to call things by their right names!"

Madame Helvetius hastened to appease the critics. "Monsieur Duclos, they want you by the fireplace. As for you, Monsieur Monterif, tell us of your

caneing rencontre with the poet. Everybody is talking about it. Madame de la Rochefoucault would be most charmed to have a good version of the little story.”—“I thank Madame de la Rochefoucault; I will relate it to her the more willingly, as the poet who was the recipient plays the best part in it. In my leisure moments I had written on cats. It was the apology of the cats and at the same time that of the women. Perhaps I had deceived myself, but I thought I wrote in all sincerity. The poet Roy had christened me for this misdeed, the historiographer of cats. The joke met with success in society. I vowed revenge. As there is but one weapon against Roy, the cane, I took a cane; I went where I knew I should find him, and at the same time that I reminded him of his satire, raised the cane with anger. Do you know what the poor devil said to me, the historiographer of cats?—‘Draw in your claws, pussy! don’t scratch! draw in your soft paws!’ You may well suppose that I dropped the stick. However, I ought rather to have told you M. de Fontenelle’s last joke, which is more in the order of the day—” —“That is not to be told too loud,” said Madame Helvetius, with a charming smile.—“Who told it to you, then?” said Madame d’Epinay, mischievously. “Come, come!” cried Duclos, “it is only citizens’ wives and dancing-girls who take offence at a little gayety.”—“Well,” continued Monterif, “last week Fontenelle went one morning to see a very pretty woman, who has taken the abbé de Bernis as her *confessor*. The lady came out to Fontenelle in her *déshabille*. ‘You see,’ said she to him, ‘that we get up for you.’—‘Yes,’ answered Fontenelle; ‘but you go to bed for somebody else.’”

—"Don't go too far, Monsieur de Monterif, we can guess the rest," said Madame de la Rochefoucault, a little too late.

Meantime, while they were waiting for him in the saloons of Helvetius, Fontenelle was doing his best to furbish up his person and his wit. "Ninon," said he to one of his nieces, the youngest of the demoiselles de Marcilly, who was at times his handmaiden, "what do you think of my looks now? Come; I will not ask with my hand on my heart, but with my hand on my eyes, is it true that I have no more grace in my smile, or fire in my glance? Men do not stop at eighty, Ninon; I am beginning to grow old rather fast; in fine, we must expect everything, even death."

—"Oh, uncle," answered Mademoiselle de Marcilly, "the little loves are still crouching in the curls of your peruke! Trust me, you will make a conquest to-night! You would be sure to have more success than I if we were both to dance a minuet at the same time."—"Are my ruffles to your liking, Ninon?"—"Yes, uncle; they were intended, you know, by Madame de Froidmont for his lordship the archbishop."

All the while that he was arranging himself with his niece, Fontenelle was taxing his memory to put in play all the resources of his mind, which, no longer capable of action, was still tricked off with tinsel. It was, if we may credit Rollin and Dnclos, a sad spectacle to see this being, almost an automaton, who looked as if he had come out of his grave for the twentieth time, this rattling skeleton, still seeking in his vanity for noise and glitter. Even in Fontenelle's best days, his intellect had not carried away everybody: plenty of people, finding neither profundity

nor truth, nothing natural or spontaneous, had withdrawn from the herd; but then, at least, the poet saved his credit by the aid of his grace and his youth. But when over eighty, to drag everywhere the superannuated paraphernalia of a wit, to desire to strew rose-leaves over his faded lips, to play the fop and the milksop, was but the sign of the man of intellect sunk into second childhood.

At last Fontenelle set out in the carriage of Madame de Forgeville, in company with the two demoiselles Marcilly. During the ride he repeated his lesson like a child.—“Let us see,” he muttered to himself; “I must make money out of everything to-night. That memorable *hush* has been scarcely heard of for these four or five years. I can still return to it. I have also lately (it was scarcely more than twenty years ago) hit on a capital paradox: *If I had my hands full of truths, I should take good care not to open them.* That always produces its effect. Not to forget my tender things to the women, and my graceful turns of speech. There is no more time to be lost.”

As Monterif was interrupted by Madame de la Rochefoucault, the doors of the great saloon were thrown open.—“There he is! it is M. Fontenelle!” was exclaimed on all sides. Madame Helvetius rushed forward to meet him. He bowed, still gracefully, seized her hand, and raised it gallantly to his centenary lips.—“Monsieur de Fontenelle, do you know that we were waiting for you to open the dance?”—“It was because I knew it that I came late; overlook this little bit of coquetry: poets are women, for which I have no cause of complaint.

And besides, if I must tell everything, I have a domestic who serves me as badly as if I had twenty." Fontenelle was placed alongside of Madame de Froidmont, who was ninety-five.—"Ah, my poor old shepherd!" said she to him, tossing her head, and lisping a little, "how old we are getting!"—"Hush! Death forgets us," said Fontenelle, putting his finger on his lips, and assuring himself that all eyes were upon him. This joke had still great success; everybody applauded.—"I have cheated Nature; I have somewhat of a Norman's cunning in that respect."—When Fontenelle had collected all the beautiful smiles which were directed on his locks, whitened by so many winters, he asked his neighbor what was under discussion when he entered.—"I am a little deaf and I do not see very well; my heavy baggage has been sent on in advance; but it is only necessary for me to know the title of the chapter to understand the conversation."—Helvetius answered him that the poets on one side, and the philosophers on the other, had been agitating the question for an hour, whether science was necessary for the happiness of mankind.—"Ah, my philosopher, you have preached up science, but, be not angry, you are mistaken. What need have we of the light of the lanterns of science to lead us to everlasting darkness?"

Mademoiselle Helvetius, who was scarcely able to walk yet, was led in at this moment. "See," said he, "my partner is weary of waiting; come, my legs, be a little lively, if you please—come on!" He rose and conducted the young dancer by the hand to the middle of the room. Then, as if by enchantment, graceful groups formed around him. He was at first

dazzled by the dresses, the looks, the flowers, the smiles, the entire pomp of luxury and beauty—he felt his legs shake, he thought for a moment that his soul was about to depart from his body in the dance; but he soon rallied, and as soon as the musicians had commenced with an air of Ronssean, he advanced at his own risk and peril, keeping continually hold of his partner's hand. Every one closely observed this singular spectacle of old age and infaney, carried around in the same whirl. After the first figure it was necessary to force Fontenelle to rest himself. “Come,” said Madame d’Epinay, “God be praised, you have got through with a difficult step.”—“It is the one before the last,” said Fontenelle, reseating himself. “When the last comes, I may make a wry face, but at least after that I shall have a long rest.”—“There is,” said Madame d’Epinay, “an old proverb which says: ‘It is only the first step that costs anything.’”—“That proverb is not common sense; the step which costs the most is the last. The first step! ah, madame, why could we not have made it together? Ah, if I was only eighty!”

Fontenelle went on in this way for more than an hour. Madame d’Epinay, who did not dance then, for certain reasons, listened with curiosity to the amiable vagaries of the poet. She was not the only one—Madame de Rochefoucault, Madame de Forgeville, and some others, came and gathered around him; while in another corner of the room, Duclos, Grimm, Collé, and Diderot, were narrating with some severity, certain chapters of his history.

The history of Fontenelle can soon be told. He lived a hundred years; but was it in truth worth

while for him to make the tour of a century? This poet without poetry, this petticoat philosopher, this man without soul, this sage of the boudoir, this Fontenelle, in fine, might surely have died half a century sooner, without any loss to us or to himself except a little noise and smoke. At ninety-eight he said, "I have neither laughed nor wept." Let us pity, pity this proud man, because he never laughed, and because he never wept.

He came into the world at Rouen in the middle of the seventeenth century. "Truly," said he, at a later period, "I did not look as if I had come into the world to make a long stay. I was so feeble that the light alone nearly killed me." His mother, Martha Corneille, was sister to the celebrated Pierre and Thomas Corneille. This shows us how Fontanelle came to be a poet. His father, François Le Bouvier, a lawyer of little fame, was well read in polite literature. He was a matter-of-fact man, of a melancholy and irascible temperament. His mother, in contrast, was mild and genial. Although a good catholic, she pardoned her brothers for their profane productions. The young Bernard went through his earliest studies at the Jesuit college of his native town. He advanced from the first by great strides through the realms of science. Thus, when thirteen, he wrote a Latin poem on the *Annunciation*, for the prize of the *Palinodes*, thought worthy to be printed if not to obtain the prize; but from that time he fell off a little. In philosophy he stopped short, being repelled by the thorns of scholastic logic. His comrades hoped at last to have their revenge. "Now," said he, long afterward, "I could not succeed so

quickly in philosophy, for the very reason that I was a philosopher. But as, from a very early period, I did not trouble myself much about anything, I did not choose to understand anything about logic; I ended by understanding something of it; I soon saw that it was not worth the trouble of understanding."

After an enthusiastic study of physics, he went through a law course, and was admitted. A good cause came in his way. He undertook the defence of a poor devil, perhaps wrongfully accused. After some explanations the judges were about to acquit him; but Fontanelle, not wishing to lose the effect of his argument, which contained a great deal about the Greeks and Romans, demanded to be heard, to complete the reparation of the accused. He argued with more of show than substance. "In a word," says the abbé Desfontaines in his journal, "he did so well, that the arrows which he pointed became weapons against the accused." After the pleadings, the judges fatigued with all this display, and mistrusting some subterfuge, exercised their powers with rigor, and the poor devil was condemned, thanks to his lawyer, who did not afterward find any one to defend.

Thomas Corneille took, on a visit to Paris, Fontanelle with him. Thomas was then conducting the *Mercur Galant* with Visé. The columns of this journal were opened to the new-comer who scattered therein the primroses of his imagination, primroses without freshness and without perfume. It was in this that he achieved his first success. The year following, after his return to Rouen, Visé wrote in the

Mercury the apology of the young Norman Muse lamenting his too long sojourn far from Paris. Fontanelle returned after having obtained the second prize from the French Academy. Immediately on his return he wrote on the *scenario* of his uncle Thomas, the verses for two operas, which attracted some attention, *Psyché* and *Bellérophon*. These operas were followed by a tragedy, *Asper*, which would be forgotten without the epigram of Racine on the origin of hisses. He abandoned the theatre in some disgust. He was a journalist and nothing more, so he set to work at newspaper writing by the volume. As soon as he had people's eyes turned toward him, Fontanelle exerted all the powers of his faculties with the wretched aim of being always an object of public attention. Vanity was his sole companion, his sole love, his sole joy. Not being able to be a man of genius, and knowing well that his memory would not long survive him, he seized on celebrity with both hands, he fought with his intellect to his death. "If he makes much ado about dying," said Duclos, laughing, "it is because he knows but too well that once in the other world, he will have nothing to contend for in this."

He returned again to Rouen, to write, in solitude and quiet, *The Plurality of Worlds*. The Marchioness de la Mésengère was living at that time in her chateau at Rouen. Fontanelle was received there as a poet; he passed all the fine afternoons in the park. Now and then, he promenaded with the marchioness, who mourned over the recollections of a fatal affection. By dint of walking with her and seeing her weep, he imagined that he was falling in love with her. Not

knowing how to begin, as he took counsel of his head and not of his heart, he imitated the shepherds. He traced passionate verses on the bark of the beech trees. If we may believe the abbé Trublet, these verses, carved by Fontenelle, were still to be seen in the middle of the eighteenth century,

“ Lycidas is so tender, and Clymene looks so well,
What will become of him ?
Oh, Love, wage war on her !—that heart of stone subdue !
Oh, Love, oh, cruel Love ! ”

When Fontenelle had written this blank verse, he turned toward the windows of Madame de la Mésengère.—“ Some day,” said he to himself, “ I will write a verse there, if it please her beautiful eyes.” He had neither the pleasure nor the trouble. The next day, a mischievous hand—doubtless that of the marchioness, made the quatrain rhyme, as follows :—

“ Lycidas is so tender, and Clymene looks so well,
What will become of him, *for Clymene doth rebel ?*
Oh, Love, wage war on her, that heart of stone subdue !
Oh, Love, oh, cruel Love, *what has become of you ?* ”

Fontenelle did not consider himself vanquished on beholding these terrible rhymes ; he wrote an icy epistle to the marchioness, full of darts and quivers. Madame de la Mésengère was unscathed ; she knew how to make a better disposition of her heart. However, for her amusement, she pretended to soften a little. The poet, anguing well from certain charitable glances, had recourse again to the bark of the beech-tree :—

“Shepherdess with the stony heart, you, who can rhyme so well,
Whose one soft glance hath given joy that words cannot express,
Beneath this tree, to-morrow eve, will you renew the spell?”

The next day Fontenelle rushed to the beech-tree—Oh, joy! oh, transport!—the rhyme was filled out! It is sufficient to say that the shepherdess with the stony heart had written “Yes,” under the three lines. You can guess whether Fontenelle was at the trysting-place. At night-fall he saw a shadow among the beech-trees; he advanced with trepidation, stretched out his hands, and fell upon his knees: “Ah, marchioness, behold me dying of love at your feet.”—“Monsieur Fontenelle, I am right sorry, but there has been some mistake; I am not the marchioness.”—Fontenelle was very alert in rising.—“I know it very well,” said he, in great dismay; “it was only a joke; but who are you, then?”—“Thérèse—nothing more.”—“The dence!” said Fontenelle; “the maid instead of the mistress! It was you, then, who wrote a word on the beech-bark?”—“Good gracions! there was no one but me in the house who could have been a shepherdess; but this does not oblige you to do anything, Monsieur Fontenelle.”

He feigned to be enamoured with La Champ-mélé, not because she was pretty, nor from love, but from sheer vanity. “M. Racine,” said she to him one day, “has told me so much against you, that I have finally come to like you, besides, your universal mind pleads marvellously in your favor. So come and see me. Fontenelle went but once. Instead of Madame he found Monsieur Champmélé. “My wife is not here,” said the comedian to him; “she is rehearsing her part with that animal La Fontaine,

who makes half my pieces." Fontenelle had his labor for his pains."

He had not a great number of mistresses. Mademoiselle Bernard, the tragic muse, was the best known and the least fickle; but what a sorry pair of lovers were they! As soon as he reached her house, forthwith to work—that is to say, at a scene of a tragedy; in lieu of a kiss, only a couplet.

Fontenelle never had any idea of marrying; he cared naught for the loving and devoted care of the wife, for the little children who make our hearts so gay, for the calm joys of the chimney-corner. He never loved any one but himself; he lived with himself. Think of his having lived so long in such company! If it had not been for his vanity, he would have died of ennui! The abbé Trublet—always the apologist of Fontenelle—thus terminates his eulogy: "What contributed not a little to the happiness of M. Fontenelle, was the fact of his never having been married."—What do you know about this same chapter of marriage, Monsieur l'Abbé?

"Even in friendship," Delille said, "Fontenelle put his heart on guard." He had, nevertheless, a great number of friends, among others, the duke of Orleans, La Motte, Marivaux, Monterif, Madame de Tencin, Madame de Lambert, and Madame de Stael. The regent liked Fontenelle's mind as one likes a curious little animal, which amuses you by its dexterity and gentleness. One day, he said to him, "Monsieur de Fontanelle, do you wish to live in the Palais Royal? A man who has written the Plurality of Worlds ought to be lodged in a palace."—"Prince, a wise man takes but little space, and does not fancy change;

but for all that I will come and take up my habitation in the Palais Royal to-morrow, with arms and baggage—that is to say, with my night-cap and slippers.”—He lived a long time at the Palais Royal. As he scarcely ever saw the regent, this prince said to him one day, “In offering you my roof, I hoped to see you at least once a year.” Fontenelle presented his Elements of the Geometry of the Infinite to the regent, with these words: “It is a book which can only be understood by seven or eight geometricians of Europe, and I am not one of those eight.” Fontenelle had the vanity of schoolmasters; he was proud of his title of academician; but he never had any active ambition. Thanks to the Duke of Orleans, he might have advanced his political fortunes, but he preferred to keep snug among his academics. His friend Cardinal Dubois came in his greatness, to seek for consolations from him. He said in consequence of this, “I know very well that his royal highness the regent might have made some great political scarecrow of me; but I heartily entreated him to leave me in my chimney-corner, for there I never had the idea of seeking consolation from Cardinal Dubois.”

However, as he wanted to show off his philosophy everywhere, he bestowed a little of it on politics. He planned a republic, which was not exactly that of Plato; a curious republic, in which “wives could repudiate their husbands without being able to be repudiated by them, but were to remain a year after without the power of remarrying. No orators in the whole state than certain orators *maintained* by the state, and intended to *maintain* to the people the happiness of their government. Statues to be erected

to great men, of whatever kind, *even to beautiful women!* For the sake of greater resemblance, their forms may even be preserved in wax, in a magnificent palace, *made expressly* for the purpose. These statues or figures to be tried for offences which would not subject the persons to corporeal punishments."— You see from this that Fontenelle had good reasons for remaining snug among his academies. With such political ideas, he would have played a very pretty part in the comedy of the regency!

After having published *The Plurality of Worlds*, he entered, armed from head to foot, into the petty war of the ancients and moderns; he made himself the champion of the moderns; therefore Boileau, who did not like satire in other hands than his own, declared himself the eternal enemy of Fontenelle; and if this name is not found at the present day between Cassagne and Colletet, it is because Boileau at that time wrote no more satires. He did not the less revenge himself; as soon as Fontenelle presented himself at the Academy, the old satirist took the field against him. Everywhere, after the visit of Fontenelle, followed that of Boileau. Fontenelle was refused admittance five times. Like a man of spirit, he wrote a *Discourse on Patience*, which he sent to the Academy. A poet who took his own part so well was not long refused admittance; the patient man was received a short time afterward.

Meanwhile, his fame was spread with greater and greater success throughout the court, the city, and the provinces. Every provincial who came to Paris with a little grammar in his head, was, above all things, desirous of seeing M. de Fontenelle; he returned,

saying on all occasions, "I have seen the opera and M. de Fontenelle! M. de Fontenelle! What a genius! He remarked, not over four years ago, to the duchess of Maine, who asked what difference there was between herself and a watch, 'Madame the duchess, the watch marks the hours and your highness makes us forget them.' And then last year he said to Madame de Tencin, 'My dear lady, your intellect is like a watch; it is always advancing.'" There was, therefore, an unlimited demand for Fontenelle, so that he rarely dined at home one day in the week. He paid for his welcome by a bon-mot prepared in advance. The same one often did him good service twenty times. Heaven knows how many grimaces he made before and after victory! Never did woman, coquette, or actress, make more ado about saying, "I love you." La Bruyère, who could see clear in daylight, in contradistinction to many wits of the day, thus sketches Fontenelle, "Cydias is a wit; it is his profession. In society, after having bent his forehead, pulled down his ruffle, extended his hand, and opened his fingers, he gravely sets forth his quintessenced thoughts and sophistical reasonings. A feeble discourser, he has no sooner set foot in a company, than he seeks some women among whom he can insinuate himself, and make a parade of his wit or his philosophy; for whether he speaks or writes, he should not be supposed to have in view either the true or the false, the reasonable or the ridiculous—he solely avoids expressing himself like other people. Cydias thinks himself equal to Lucian or Seneca; but he is only a compound of the pedant and the precisian, made up for the admiration of city and provincials."

To discourage criticism, Fontenelle had declared that he would burn unread all the journals which commented upon his works. As his works were very widely circulated, as he had a footing everywhere, as he knew how to give a helping hand at the right time, no one was severe upon him except Rousseau and La Bruyère. Everybody sang his praises: the *Mercur* *Galant* and the *Gazette de France*, Bayle and Voltaire, the blue stockings of Peru and the poets of Stockholm, in prose and verse—even in Latin verses. And such verses, and such praises! He is Plato, Orpheus, more than a man, a demigod! Listen to Crébillon:

“Poet whom old Greece

Would, e'en from infant days, have set 'mid demigods.”

Hear, too, M. de Nivernois: “All the temples of genius celebrate his worship. Like those master-works of architecture which unite the riches of all the orders, he has gathered the palms of the universe.” You see that M. de Nivernois was not forced to any expression for the sake of rhyme. It is not the language of the gods; but Fontenelle would not have disdained such prose. Nor the following: “The books of M. de Fontenelle are enamelled with beautiful thoughts. It is better than a meadow; they present the majestic spectacle of the firmament, whose azure is *agreeably* relieved by the sparkling gold of the stars.” So said the abbé Trublet. What do you think of that *agreeably*? Fontenelle would have found it to his taste. Everybody, even to Voltaire, who said:—

“Him the fool doth understand, the wise to praise unite.”

But Voltaire, doubtless to imitate Fontanelle, ended his tirade with a point :—

“ Born with gifts the highest, he an opera doth indite.”

Even to Rigand, who has left us a portrait of Fontenelle, enlivened with an indescribably charming smile, which is almost like the smile of a woman who has loved.

What a sad concert of incredible laudations! Wherefore this bad verse and bad prose? Why these temples, this incense, this worship, which is a profanation of poësy? Let us look a little into Fontenelle's claims. Is not his best that of having lived a century? Posterity may do what it will; a poet who lives a century will make his way better than most others. He made his *début* in the *Mercure*, by the letters of gallantry of the Chevalier d'Iler—, in which he has aimed at displaying all his powers. I therefore read over again the letter to *Mademoiselle de V.*, on a white hair which she had. After many fatiguing involutions, he exclaims, “ Could you not, Mademoiselle, be a little under the influences of the tender passion, without immediately growing pale? Love was designed to put a new brilliancy in your eyes, to paint your cheeks a fresh carnation, but not to scatter snows upon your head. His duty is to adorn you! It would be a great pity if he should make you grow old who rejuvenates the whole world. Pluck out from your locks this white hair, and at the same time pluck out its root which is in your heart.” I have taken the best paragraph. All the letters are in this provincial and formal style.

Almost at the same time, Fontenelle wrote the

Plurality of Worlds, taking Descartes, in his most chimerical fancies, as a guide. It is here that he shines in full force. He wished to give the fruit under the flower, philosophy under the form of the graces, truth under the flattering veil of falsehood. "I am the first," said he unceremoniously—He counted without La Fontaine—but could he, who wrote that "the simple is a shade of the vulgar," think of La Fontaine? As for the Plurality of Worlds, the only book of Fontenelle's which has come down to us, I reproduce the verdict of Voltaire. "This book, founded upon chimeras can never become classic. Philosophy is above all things the truth; the truth should not hide itself under false ornaments."

We can find in the author of the Plurality of Worlds a certain boldness, brilliant rhetoric, grace, if not naturalness, common sense if not profundity. But it must be confessed that graceful phrases are not the proper equipment for the discovery of new worlds; meditation would be a better travelling companion; to the meditative man the horizon expands at every step. The sky would, perhaps, be a little cloudy, sometimes foggy, but poetry is often in the cloud, and the sun which dissipates the fog appears with greater splendor; while for mere grace, the horizon, however beautiful, is at once restricted. Thus we find in the worlds of Fontenelle, *a great mass of celestial matter in which the sun is cramped up. The aurora is a grace which Nature gives us over and above full measure. Of the entire celestial assemblage there has remained to the earth only the moon, which appears to be much*

attached to it. All this is very pretty, especially for laughing scholars learning geography, or for women who are examining the Chinese figures on their fans while listening. Gracefulness was the flower of the Muses a hundred years ago. Contemplation, the passion of the poets of the present day, was then, according to Fontanelle, only the mountain whence poetry takes its rise. This mountain has other springs, if we may believe Goethe, Byron, Hugo, and so many others of our day, who would have revealed a new world to Fontenelle.

A bitter criticism on the Plurality of Worlds would be to say, that the book is written for the worst class of women, the blue-stockings. In the time of Fontenelle, the marchionesses of the Hotel Rambouillet scattered themselves here and there in the saloons, having always on their lips, not a smile, but alas! some witticism. Fontenelle, who had studied in this school, Fontenelle, too feeble to live with men, soon pitched his tent by the side of the women. As he had no love, he sought the hymen of the mind; he united himself to the blue-stockings. Here is the secret of this dried-up heart, the secret of this soulless mind.

Before this connection with these blue-stockings, he was seized with a great liking for Voltaire, D'Urfey, and Mademoiselle de Scudery; he had promenaded in mind along the river of Tenderness, with the shepherdesses of Lignon, writing in the *Mercur Galant* to the first woman he came across, in the style of Voiture. This unfortunate poetical dawn threw its deceptive rays over the whole of his life; he could not avoid occasional unlucky returns to

his youth. He was already far from that period when he described in the *Mercur*e the empire of poetry. This digression is still of the famous school. Fontenelle, therefore, commences in this wise: "This empire is divided into high and low poetry, like most of our provinces. The capital of this empire is called Epic. We always find people at its gate who are killing one another. On the other hand, when we pass through Romance, which is the faubourg of the Epic, we are always meeting people who are in great joy, and who are soon to be married. Low poetry resembles very much the low countries—it is full of quagmires: Burlesque is its capital. Two rivers water the country; one is the River of Rhyme, which takes its source from the foot of the mountains of Revery. These mountains have elevated peaks, which are called the Peaks of Sublime Thought. Many reach them by supernatural efforts, but an infinite number fall who are a long time in getting on their legs again. The other river is that of Reason. These two rivers are sufficiently remote from one another. There is but one mouth to the River of Rhyme which corresponds to the River of Reason. It results from this that many villages situated on the River of Rhyme, as the Virelay, the Ballad, the Royal Ode, can have no commerce with the River of Reason. There is in the country of poetry a very dense forest where the rays of the sun never penetrate: it is the forest of Balderdash where Reason loses itself."

Did not M. de Fontenelle travel a little in that same forest?

The History of the Oracles is merely an agreeable

summary of the immense work of Van Dale. Fontenelle received without complaint the entire glory due to the learned foreigner. *The History of the Academy of Sciences* is a brilliant, varied, and luminous journal; but in it, as in everything else, M. Fontenelle is only half a critic and half a scholar. This history is a journal and nothing more. Is it worth while to point out a mass of wretched productions which died in the cradle, as the *History of the French Stage*, the *Parallel between Corneille and Racine*, where he says: "The characters of Racine have something low about them from being natural." The *Discourse on Poetry*, which contains none; *On Happiness*—(what could this man, joyless and tearless, say on this head?) *On the Human Reason*, in which he coldly puts forth unreasonable nonsense. Is it worth the trouble to bring to light again those pastorals in Sunday clothes, those eclogues which expand far from the sun, far from the mountains, far from Nature, on a Gobelin carpet, before a screen, under the glitter of chandeliers; those songs which people have taken good care not to sing, those tragedies in prose and verse which they have taken good care not to play, those letters without freedom which they have taken good care not to read?

Fontenelle has passed for a poet full of spirit, grace, and philosophy. To this his verses might furnish a sufficient answer.

"Arcas and Palemon, both of the same age—both well-matched competitors the one for the other—both answering one another by similar songs—formed a pastoral combat:—it was not the contemptible glory—either of song or of verse which excited their minds."

Such is the style in which M. de Fontenelle put his shepherds on the scene. Not a word of the country, of the sky, or of the flocks—are they on the meadow or on the road, in the shade of the beeches or at the edge of the spring. What matter! M. de Fontenelle does not descend to these petty prosaic pictures—he does not take the trouble to paint his shepherds for us; but in return the ingenious poet does not forget to inform us in an admirable style that they are *both of the same age*. He goes further; knowing every reader's forgetfulness of numbers, he repeats thrice, with infinite art, that they are two, neither more nor less. What do you say to these *well-matched competitors*, who form a *pastoral combat* of hard knocks, of *similar songs*, and of that *contemptible glory*, which did not *excite* their minds? Well! Here is at last a poet who does not talk like the rest. Do not be astonished that after similar masterpieces, M. de Fontenelle should, as head of the school, have written a discourse on the Eclogue, in which, among other happy remarks, he observes that Theocritus is coarse and ridiculous; that Virgil, “too rustic,” is only a copyist of Theocritus. But I am forgetting to tell you how Fontenelle's shepherds talk:

TIRCIS. Whither go you, Lycidas?

LYCIDAS. I am traversing the plain, and even intend to mount the neighboring hill.

TIRCIS. The walk is a long one.

LYCIDAS. Ah! if need were, for the cause which leads me, I would go still farther.

TIRCIS. It is easy to understand you—always love?

LYCIDAS. Always. What can we do without love?

TIRCIS. Thou knowest Lygdamis ?

LYCIDAS. Who knows him not ? 'Tis he who adores the charms of Clymena.

TIRCIS. Himself.

LYCIDAS. What a shepherd ! He is of a character which would have pleased me in a lover had I been a shepherdess.

You think that I have been quoting prose. It may be so ; if, however, we are to trust M. de Fontenelle, it is an eclogue in verse.

These are not true shepherds, but stupid shepherds, such as you will not find in Champagne. If you should happen, in some little rural excursion, in Normandy, the country of Fontenelle, to meet on the shady side of the road with some pensive young shepherd, listening to the cooing of the pigeons more than to the cries of his dogs, make him tell you what is in his heart. He will not respond like Lycidas, *What can we do without love ? 'Tis I who the charms of Clymena adore ;* he will tell you pretty much this : "I love Elizabeth, a pretty girl who is watering the salads in her father's little garden. Do you see her beautiful head rising just above the hedge ? Ah ! I wish her mother's eyes were not so sharp ! But she will not prevent Elizabeth from passing presently along this road, for it is the cross road which leads to their field. With this fine sun she will go and turn over the hay with the hazel pitchfork which I cut for her in this little wood. As she passes I will stop her to tell her that I love her, and slip into her bosom a pretty bouquet of violets which I have kissed a thousand times. At night she will put it at the head of her bed alongside of the Easter palm, and even when asleep she will think of me."

No amorous shepherd speaks as badly as those of Fontenelle, because he is in love and not a scholar.

There is not, as you see, a worse poet in France than Fontenelle. As a critic he does not shine in the first rank. I do not wish to make war on him with other weapons than his own words; so listen to him: "The Latins are superior to the Greeks, Virgil to Homer, Horace to Pindar. We only need patience; it is easy to foresee that after a long series of ages no one will have any scruple about preferring us openly to the Greeks and Latins. I do not think *Theagenes and Chariclea*, *Clitophon and Leucippe*, can ever be compared to *Cyrus* and the *Ass-trea*. There are also new departments of writing, such as letters of gallantry, tales, and operas, each one of which has furnished us with an excellent author, to whom antiquity can oppose no rival, and whom apparently posterity will not surpass. Were there nothing but songs, a perishable class of writing, and to which much attention is not given, we can show a prodigious quantity full of animation and merit, and I maintain that if Anacreon had read them, he would rather have sung them than the greater part of his own. We see at the present day, by a great number of poetical works, that versification can have as much elevation, but, at the same time, more regularity and exactness than it has ever had."

By these few lines you can judge of the style and depth of Fontenelle, such is his serious style, his severe reasoning. It is of a kind to make one regret his bed-chamber style, and his bookish badinage; with all these periods rounded off so pretentiously, almost always terminating with a bad metaphor, or

a stroke of smartness, these points so painfully sharpened, which made Rollin remark that "the end of every paragraph in Fontenelle, is a position which the periods seem to have been ordered to seize upon."

When Fontenelle thinks, he is Pascal as a wit, he is La Rochefoucault at Quimper-Corentin, and sometimes even at the chateau of La Palisse. The most fanatical disciple of Fontenelle, the abbé Trublet, the same who *compiled, and compiled, and compiled*, according to Voltaire, this subaltern spirit, as La Bruyère styles him, who was only the register, or the storehouse for the works of others, has extracted from the works of Fontenelle a large volume of thoughts under this title: *The Spirit of M. de Fontenelle*. The poor abbé, among other fine things, has said in the preface: "This volume is almost double the size of the *Maxims* of Rochefoucault. It is almost equal to that of the *Thoughts* of Pascal, and the *Characters* of La Bruyère; yet these three works fused together would be far from equalling it in value."

Now what, then, will remain of this man of intellect, who lived under the sun without seeing the sky; by the side of women without opening his heart; on the hill-side without plucking the ripening grape?—of this prose writer who lost eighty years in bedecking with tinsel the most vulgar truisms; in cultivating flowerets without perfume; in dazzling his eyes with fireworks of the kind which leave only a deeper darkness when over; in weighing, as Voltaire has said, a point or an epigram in scales hung on spider-webs; of this poet without soul and without greatness, as without simplicity; who babbled only for the blue-stockings of his time;

who made of the Venus de Medicis a puppet well bedizened with spangles; of this thinker who said almost nothing; of this somewhat provincial wit whose best thing has been long since forgotten; of this somewhat Norman critic, who found Homer confused, Theocritus coarse, Virgil too rustic, Boileau wanting in wit, Racine commonplace, La Fontaine trivial, Molière in bad taste; who thought that the moderns (thanks, doubtless, to M. de Fontenelle) surpassed the ancients? What remains of him? Piron has told us—Piron, so despised, but who was a man of a different stamp. Hear, therefore, Piron: “Voiture begat Fontenelle; Fontenelle begat Monterif; and Monterif will beget nothing at all.” Yes; Fontenelle died with Monterif. Pray God for the repose of his works! There is, however, one work of Fontenelle which will escape oblivion; this work is a thought—the thought of a philosopher: “If I had my hands full of truths, I should take good care not to open them.”

His heart has no hold on one, was the remark of the Marchioness de Lambert; it was the opinion of everybody, even of the blue stockings; but, at a later period, Condorcet, through blind zeal, has been led to make the apology for the heart of Fontenelle. In spite of this apology, it is a matter of literary notoriety, that Fontenelle wanted a heart; it is sad but it must be said. Justice must be done to every one. I do not blame Fontenelle, but I say to him with Madame de Tencin, “Ah, how I pity you, for it is not a heart which you have got there in your breast, but brains such as you have in your head!” Would you have proof, listen to Collé, who relates in his

journal, that a nephew of the great Corneille, a cousin of Fontenelle, begged in vain at the door of the almost centenary poet, who was heaping pension on pension, revenues on revenues. I pass over in silence the too well-known story of the asparagns and twenty others as sad to relate; but to edify you on this chapter, listen to Fontenelle himself: "In the age of love affairs, my mistress quits me, and takes another lover. I go to her house in a fury, and overwhelm her with reproaches. She listens to me, and laughingly answers: 'When I took you, it was pleasure I was in search of; I find more with another.'—'In faith,' said I, 'you are right!'" Hear him again: "I never seriously had the desire to love or to be loved;" or again, "I have never, God be thanked," (God be thanked!—that name is well placed there!) "felt either love or the other human passions; but I know them all, and it is from that that I have guarded against them." In conclusion, you already know that Fontenelle said when dying, "For nearly a century I have neither laughed nor cried." He had ended by becoming accustomed to the table of Madame de Tencin, dining there almost every day. He was told that she was dead; "Well," said he, with his ordinary serenity, "I will go and dine at Madame Geoffrin's."

He passed his life peaceably, far from all passion, in the trifling endearments, as he called them, of certain women who had not a great deal to do here below. This man who loved only himself, nevertheless could not live in solitude. He never knew the joys of liberty. He always wanted a compliment. A slave to his vanity, for his vanity he made himself the

slave to the first comer. The roof which sheltered him in this world was never other than the roof of hospitality; he passed his days here and there; with Thomas Corneille, with M. le Hagnais, at the Palais Royal, with M. d'Aube (you know him; that M. d'Aube celebrated by Rulhieres). To make amends, he always dined out with Madame de Tencin, with Madame d'Epinaÿ, with Madame de Lambert, with Madame d'Argenton, in fine, everywhere except at home. This style of living could not fail of being economical. He, therefore, although a poet without patrimony, died with an income of 35,000 livres (he belonged to all the paying academies), without speaking of 75,000 livres, in ringing coins, which, when about eighty-seven, he had concealed in his mattresses, doubtless, to repose upon in the other world. Let any one say now, that all the poets are improvident; but Fontenelle was not a poet. Now I repeat, that while he was thus hiding away his money, his cousin, the nephew of the great Corneille—the nephew of his mother—was begging at a neighboring door! Besides, were there not twenty other unfortunates to succor at that time in the great family of men of letters, whence he had issued so rich and glorious? Malfilâtre dying of hunger! And so many other hidden miseries which the eye of charity always discovers; so many other souls that were breaking their wings against the corners of some confined room, or the rafters of a garret! Oh! Monsieur de Fontenelle, you would have been pardoned for much prose and many a verse, for some open-handed charity! One would not say, "He is a bad poet," if one could apply to you the words of Scripture:

“He hath been on the earth like the blessed dew.”

He died in the winter of 1757, as a tolerably good Christian, without fear, without regrets, without noise, and without a shock. On seeing his hearse pass, Piron exclaimed, “There is the first time that M. de Fontenelle has left home not to go and dine in the city!” Was not that a worthy funeral oration?

In order to be just, and to temper a little this frank and rude criticism, I wish to record here another funeral oration. The day after Fontenelle’s death, at a supper in good society, a fine lady having made some very delicate witticism which was not understood, exclaimed, “Ah, Fontenelle, where are you?”

MARIVAUD.

THE seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are connected by the war between the ancients and the moderns. From 1672 to 1725, there is perceptible not a literary revolution, but a serious revolt, which somewhat disquieted those who were accustomed to a fine style and sound doctrines. The entire history of the war between the Ancients and the Moderns is well known; but has any one studied the peculiar characteristics of those who had revolted against the ancients? Besides, beyond the battle-field where Perrault, Fontenelle, La Motte, and Marivaux, contended, others were seeking new sources of inspiration, instance Crébillon the tragic, the abbé Prévost, Piron himself, and almost all of those who were good hands at the pen. They already thought there was a revival of letters. A curious parallel might be instituted between those times and our own. In 1700, all the authors were already forming a school of poetry to suit their own powers, as at our day.

When Marivaux made his *début*, the oft-renewed war had at last wearied the combatants. Moreover,

Boileau was dead; La Motte no longer protested against poetry, except by his tragedies in prose or by his odes. Meanwhile, the wits of his time followed somewhat the heresies of Fontenelle and La Motte. Thus Duclaux, Montesquieu, and others less celebrated, lacking a feeling for poetry, declared that poetry was only a scholastic amusement. This heresy continued through the whole of the eighteenth century. "It is as beautiful as fine prose," said Buffon, at a later period, on hearing some verses. Buffon was right: in the eighteenth century, the prose of Jean Jacques Rousseau had dethroned the poetry of Jean Baptiste Rousseau.

Marivaux imbibed his hatred against poetry in the company of Fontenelle and La Motte, who beheld with some hope another youthful mind rashly venture in such a contest. Fontenelle smiled in taking up arms. La Motte, always reasonable, even in his errors, combated with moderation; Marivaux, younger and more determined, blindly threw himself at the onslaught against Homer, whom, in derision, he styled the *divine*. It must, however, be said, that, not daring to fight him face to face, he commenced by travestying him. He did not limit himself to this sacrilegious action. He ventured openly to condemn Molière. This was, moreover, the tactics of the chiefs of the revolt. We have already seen how little Fontenelle thought of Racine; La Motte by no means liked La Fontaine: war was waged in favor of those moderns who were 'yept Fontenelle, La Motte, and Marivaux, but not in favor of Molière, La Fontaine, and Racine. As is always the case, they fought for themselves, and not for others.

Fontenelle, La Motte, and Marivaux, who, thanks to their paradoxes, rather than to their talents, occupied a large space in the first half of the eighteenth century, will not be forgotten in literary history. Marivaux, the least of a scholar of the three, may most surely defy oblivion: in the first instance by his talent, and in the second by his style, or rather by his manner of writing. Fontenelle, it is true, may claim a little of that jargon which sparkles, entices, and fatigues. Like Marivaux, he took the most roundabout course of saying what he had to say. In the vitiated style of Fontenelle, however, the heart never utters a word. In the prettinesses of Marivaux, the heart utters tones which prove to you that Nature is still there. For example, is it not the heart which speaks -- the heart only -- when Mariamne, deserted, sees a crowd of unknown persons pass, of whom she envies even the most unfortunate. "Alas," exclaims she; "some one is expecting them!"

Wit was sadly injurious to both of these men; it limited their horizon; it imprisoned them in another Hôtel Rambouillet, where all that was true and simple was proscribed, where grace was bedizened with finery too worldly. In a word, their defect was to have had too much wit, or rather to have loved wit too much.

Marivaux was born in 1688, at Paris, where he died at the age of seventy-five. He lived poor, and did good. A youthful beggar held out his hand to him at the corner of the street. "Why do you not work?" -- "Alas, master, if you only knew how lazy I am!" -- Touched by this frank avowal, he gave the beggar enough to enable him to continue his mode of life,

saying, that in order to be good enough, it was needful to be too good. This reminds me of a happy expression of Helvetius, one which honors the writer as well as the philosopher. In a discussion, Marivaux became very much heated against Helvetius, from whom he received a pension. Helvetius did not make any defence; he contented himself with saying after Marivaux had gone, "How I should have answered him, if I was not under obligations to him for accepting my favors!"

Marivaux passed his life at the theatre, at the café, in the world, always engrossed by romances, comedies, and passions. He went from one subject to another with a truly feminine inconstancy. He was never willing to finish his *Marianne*, or the *Payisan Parvenu*, saying all that belonged to ancient history. We are all alike; the fine romance, the good comedy is the romance, the comedy to be written. How many great poets are there in imagination, who are only blotters of paper when they have pen in hand! To Marivaux, love was like romance or comedy; he had every day some new fancy; he never went so far as to complete the work; thus, just smitten with Mademoiselle Leconvreur, he fell in love with Mademoiselle Sylvia, whom he forgot the next day for Mademoiselle Sallé. I forgot—he forgot it himself—Marivaux married when thirty. His wife was the daughter of an attorney of Sens, who had died, leaving scarcely any property. His domestic life was very calm, very still, occupied only by laborious study and unquiet love. Marivaux had never discovered the secret of being happy, on account of his deplorable habit of minutely studying the atoms of

passion. His wife had all the charms of heart, of simplicity, and of grace; she loved him with touching tenderness; she was the life, the smile, the joy of his house; he was not rich, but she was contented with little. She soon presented him with a daughter, who ought to have made this happy household still more gay. He had happiness within his grasp, but the ingrate did not perceive it until the death of his wife, eighteen months after his marriage. During these eighteen months, he had lost his time in searching for the philosophy of happiness. When his daughter was eighteen, he placed her in a convent, saying that he could give her no portion. Is not liberty, when one has beauty, a portion for a queen? Mademoiselle de MarivauX did not give her first love to God, but perhaps I will relate to you some day her mournful story.

MarivauX was long in reaching the Academy. He deceived himself, says the criticism of the time; it was to the Academy of Sciences that he should have gone, as the inventor of a new idiom, and not to the French academy, of whose language he was ignorant. MarivauX never answered satires nor epigrams; much criticised at all times, he contented himself with saying, like the bull to the fly, "Ah, friend, who thought you were there?"

After being more than twenty times successful at the *Comédie-Française* and the *Comédie-Italienne*, he found himself as poor as when he began. The theatre, a century ago, was not a gold-mine for poets. Meanwhile, old age arrived. With his habit of giving with both hands, his position disquieted his friends. He fell sick. Fontenelle, who, if he had had the

heart of Marivaux, might have been the banker of literature, one morning brought a hundred louis to the sick man. Marivaux took the sum with tears in his eyes, but immediately returned it to Fontenelle. "I know," said he to him, "all the worth of your friendship; I respond to it as I ought to, and as you deserve; I regard these hundred louis as received; I have made use of them, and I return them to you with thanks."

Marivaux flourished like a pretty woman; his only good time was the spring—his autumn was gloomy, and his winter sad and desolate. He was forgotten in France; Grimm did not wait for his death to declare, that "the vigorous breath of philosophy has long since tossed over all those slight reputations built upon reeds." England has fully revenged Marivaux for this forgetful inconstancy of the French. Marivaux was long admired and taken as a model by the English. His *Spectateur* made a fortune there; and his romances inspired Richardson and Fielding.

Voltaire said of Marivaux: "He is a man who understands all the by-paths of the human heart, but does not know the highway." This happy expression is an eulogium of high value. Every one can not pass through those by-paths in that wild country where sovereign reason herself can not pursue a straight course. In the school of poetry which he made to suit himself, Marivaux shows with how much subtlety he has followed so tortuous a route. "With the comic writers, Love, until this time, has been at odds with the circumstances which surround him, and finishes by being happy in spite of his op-

ponents. With me he is at odds with himself alone, and ends by being happy in spite of himself. He will learn by my pieces how to distrust more the tricks which he plays himself, than the snares which are set for him by other hands." Upon this he was accused of touching but one chord of the heart. "You only know how to contrive love surprises." He replied immediately, and contended that no one could have greater variety than himself: "In my pieces you will find sometimes a love which is unknown to other parties—sometimes a love which they feel but wish to conceal from each other; sometimes a timid love which does not dare to declare itself; sometimes, in fine, an uncertain, and, as it were, an undecided and half-developed love, which they suspect without being sure of, and of which they have a half-conscious idea within themselves, before they allow it to take its course. Where in all this is the sameness which they so unweariedly charge me with?" Whatever he may say, it is always a love which hides itself, it is always a surprise of love. These delicate touches, these exquisite turns, these imperceptible shades, are somewhat lost in a theatre from the spectator's point of view. At the first representation, it was with great difficulty the public was impressed but little by little, knowing by hearsay that there was a great deal of talent in these pretty pieces, they ended by understanding and applauding.

Marivaux, as original in his life as in his works, had his first pieces performed without being willing to become known even to the actors. A discreet friend arranged everything. As for himself he paid

for admission to see the representations like any chance passer-by, allowing himself to become tired without ceremony, and to say so openly. One day the celebrated Sylvia, of the *Comédie-Italienne*, despairing of being able to express all the delicate shades of her part in the "*Surprise de l'Amour*," exclaimed aloud that she would give anything in the world to know the author of the piece. Marivaux's agent, as discreet as he was, carried him by main force to the house of Mademoiselle Sylvia. He presented him as a friend, with whom he was passing. The actress was at her toilet. Marivaux asked permission to admire her at home as he had on the stage. While finishing off a madrigal, Marivaux took up a pamphlet lying open on a table. "It is the '*Surprise de l'Amour*,'" said Mademoiselle Sylvia—"it is a charming play, but I am provoked with the author, who is a vain man, and does not wish to let himself be known. We should perform the piece a hundred times better if he had condescended to read it to us himself." Marivaux at once commenced reading Sylvia's part. She listened to him like an actress, passionately fond of her art. "You throw great light upon it," she exclaimed; "Although I have been playing this comedy for two years, I have never yet understood my part. You are the devil or the author." Marivaux did not conceal the fact any longer. "I am very willing," said he, "to acknowledge my faults; but I wish to tell you yours as well. You are wrong in showing so much spirit in your part. You flatter your vanity, but you miscontrue the sense. Actors must never appear to feel the weight of that which they say—

nature never studies before speaking. You must leave something for the mind of the spectator. "But, good Heavens," said Mademoiselle Sylvia, "be careful how you take for granted the existence of an intelligence in the spectator which he does not possess; we shall do him an honor dangerous to ourselves and little flattering to him, as he will perceive nothing of it."—"Well, you are doubtless right: continue to play badly to be applauded, and without glorifying ourselves therefor, let us both think like that orator who, seeing himself applauded by the multitude, asked if he had said anything foolish."

In his romances, Marivaux abandoned himself still more to all the graceful turns of his crowquill, saying that he knew how to distinguish between the wit which is only happy when spoken from that which is only good when read. The metaphysics of the heart are more supportable in a romance than in a comedy. Marivaux was desirous that a romance should make one feel and think. He was wrong in believing that the reader could not dispense with the author's reflections. Are not the lovers who talk the most those who understand one another the least?

Marivaux liked but three men in French literature. The only ones that he recognised were Montaigne, Corneille, and Dufresny. "Those," said he, "owe nothing to any one." It will be noticed that originality, before all things, was his touchstone. "I like better to be humbly seated on the hindmost bench of the small company of original authors, than to be ostentatiously placed in the front row of the great tribe of literary apes." He has been compared with Dufresny, but Dufresny is superior to him. Dufresny's

originality is in his ideas, that of Marivaux, who has but few ideas, is only in the manner of saying what he thinks; Dufresny is natural in his wit, Marivaux is frequently only affected.

A horticulturist of the time one day made a criticism on Fontenelle, by giving the name of this celebrated poet to the variegated rammenulus. In truth the phrases of Fontenelle are overloaded with epigrams, *concetti*, and madrigals. As for Marivaux, if it was needful for me to criticise his works, should I not succeed in so doing by relating this little story?

At twenty, Marivaux was violently smitten by a young girl of a citizen family. She was beautiful from her grace, her smile, and her youth. She had the beauty of the devil in all its splendor. Although she was not yet twenty, she already knew all the tricks of coquetry. However, as youth has numerous privileges, this young girl was sometimes naive and simple even in her studied graces. More and more enamored, Marivaux asked her hand. As she was twenty, and Marivaux was gallantly equipped, she gave her word, thinking she gave her heart. On the eve of the marriage, Marivaux visited his betrothed to admire once more her beautiful face. She was alone in her room. He entered on tiptoe to surprise her by a kiss; but scarce had he entered, when he forgot this *love surprise*. The fair one was gravely occupied in studying the play of her countenance—she inclined her head, she raised her eyes, she smiled or sighed—“she assumed all the attitudes of the three Graces.” Never had coquette sought a better lesson from her mirror. Offended by all her tricks, Marivaux took up his hat, and went off without say-

ing a word, resolved never to marry the coquette. Had he not, however, seen the living and faithful image of his Muse?

Marivaux, in spite of his goodness, had few friends. Intercourse with him was as thorny a matter as with a coquette. He saw malice in the simplest phrases. You see where his mournful habit of having a design in every step and every word had conducted him. What may appear strange is, that he thought himself the most simple, if not the most natural man in the world; he spoke as he wrote, and, in fine, imagined that he wrote as men speak when they know how to speak. He thought himself so far from all artifice, that he could not pardon others for not being natural. A man had written to him in his own style. "There," said he, "is a charming unstudied man!"—He went to see him; he was asked to wait; he perceived, by chance, on this man's desk the rough draft of the letter which had enticed him, and which he thought had been written as fast as pen could move.—"These rough drafts," said he, "do him great injury. He may henceforward make minutes of his letters for whom he pleases, but he shall not receive any more of mine."—He went off, and never returned.

At the age when love gathers its second harvest, he consoled himself for the sorrows of life with a devoted woman, who resigned herself with a good grace to the part of nurse. He died as a Christian philosopher, ridiculing the free-thinkers of the day. "They are doing their best to stultify themselves about the other world: they will end by being saved in spite of themselves."—D'Alembert sadly remarks—for

this remark dates from his old age, that Marivaux, unlike the false sages, did not take old age for the age of reason. He felt that old age was little more than the prelude of death. "It is," said he, "a war in which one is vanquished on every field of battle."—D'Alembert, before the whole Academy, thus terminated the eulogy of Marivaux: "He was happy enough to find an *object of attachment*, who, without having the vivacities of love, filled his latter years with happiness and peace. It is above all when the age of the passions has terminated for us, that we have need of the society of a sweet and complaisant woman who partakes our sorrows, calms or tempers our pains, who bears with our faults. Happy he who can find such a friend; more happy he who can preserve her, and has not the misfortune to survive her!"—D'Alembert had just lost Mademoiselle de Lespinasse.

Marivaux died at the same time as Louis Racine. Bachaumont delivered the following funeral oration upon the latter: "We have lost M. Louis Racine, who had long been brutalized by wine and devotion."—As a funeral oration for Marivaux, a friend published a volume under the title of "Spirit of M. de Marivaux." This volume is curious to run over, from the preface to the approval of the censor, which is in the style of Marivaux: "I have read by order, a manuscript, having for title '*The Spirit of Marivaux*.' I have *thought* that I had found therein the fineness of thought and delicacy of expression which were peculiar to this author, and I consider that its publication may be permitted." Does not this final happy expression complete the portrait of this charming and strange man. He was asked, "What is

the soul?"—"You must ask Fontenelle," answered he; but immediately continued, "He has too much sense to know anything more about it than I do."—Malabranche had ended by saying pretty much the same thing, weary of having walked all his life upon the edge of the abyss of philosophy. But has not this expression of Marivaux's, wit beyond the bounds of wit? It was a fault into which he always fell. He has said that a beautiful woman should conceal the half of her beauty. Why did he not conceal the half of his wit?

PIRON.

THE being, whom I am about to revive, is not a mincing Muse languidly stretched on a sofa in a perfumed boudoir, whose window is never opened to the sun, to the morning breezes, to the murmurs of Nature. No: this is not a little marchioness who prattles affectedly with an abbé or guardsman, who loses her grace from excess of grace, her heart from excess of wit, her soul God knows how! It is a true Burgundian Muse, a buxom girl, simple and without art, who laughs immoderately, but does not know how to smile, who has her heart in her hand, and a retort on her lips when the glass is not there, for she is somewhat fond of the pot-house. She was not brought up in a convent; she is a vagabond Muse, who has thrown too soon her purity to the winds. She passed her youth like a wanton girl, singing and diffusing gayety over the strolling theatres, and sometimes carrying intoxication and folly to the extent of profaning love, that smile of Heaven moistened with angel's tears, in a song unworthy of a poet, unworthy of a man, unworthy of a tipsy Burgundian. Have patience! On the decline of this

youth, lusty and exuberant, and grown wild as the forest of evil passions, all this deviltry will be sobered down, the wild gayety will become gentle and loveable, her flowing locks will be tied up again, her dress lengthened. She is always the same pretty girl, and in good humor, more than ever fond of a joke; but the scene has changed. Farewell Tabarin, all hail Molière! It is no longer Harlequin, it is the Métromania. Poetry has forgiven her, but Heaven has been outraged—it needs an expiation, it needs many tears to blot out that cursed and fatal ink which has served for this masterpiece of profanation—it requires many a prayer to drown the echo of this horrible song. Patience! behold the devil grown old: this Muse, which sung so wickedly in its youth, is soon about to expire singing psalms. St. Augustine who had the science of the heart, has said in his wisdom: “*The heart comes to us from God, the heart returns to God.*” But if God has pardoned the repentant Piron, the French Academy has not yet pardoned him—not entirely—for that song.

Thus, before we come to the delicate pastels of Delatour, I would study a bold portrait by Regault. Piron lived outside of that pretty bantering world which played with roses and slept in silk. If the abbés and the marquises met the Burgundian poet, it was rarely but at the theatre or the Café Procope—seldom or never in the saloons. Piron was poor; besides he had his wit against him. People fled from his jokes as fast as their legs could carry them, almost always with a limp.

In the seventeenth century, there lived at Dijon, among the officials, an apothecary who had his shop

always full of wit, spirit, and gayety. Did any one ask for ptisana, he gave him a drinking song; did they want some physic, he offered them an harangue in Burgundian patois. Thus did this new-fashioned apothecary cure all his patients so well that he died poor, leaving nothing to his descendants but an edifying collection of poems, songs, and Christmas carols. This was all the inheritance of Alexis Piron.

Alexis Piron, son of Aimé Piron, came into the world in the summer of 1689, in the same season with Montesquieu, a little before Voltaire. His father, who celebrated all memorable events, took care not to pass this over in silence. Piron was celebrated in song at his birth, like the son of a king. It was a good omen. At twelve, Piron, already responded to the song, he passed all his leisure hours in planning, scanning, stringing rhymes, as he has said, out of French syllables. One of his comrades who was somewhat his elder, being enrolled in the dragoons, said to him on the day of departure: "I shall return Achilles."—"You will find me Homer," answered Piron. At a later period, on recalling the incident, the poet, who had become blind, exclaimed: "Poor Achilles would have found me blind like Homer, if he had not died at the Invalides." His studies were severe. By degrees the desire for rhyming became extinct in his young imagination. At sixteen he laughed at Apollo and the Muses, like a youth who has already lost that precious candor which is needed for love and poetry. On leaving school he betook himself to the study of the law, but scarce had he opened his books when the Muse of pleasure and

wild gayety distracted his mind. God keep you from ever knowing what were the first inspirations of this muse. There exists not enough indignation to wither this bad work, which pursued Piron to the tomb like a pitiless Megara. Piron had just been admitted advocate, but how defend others after that. Fearing the noise made about his fatal song, which made the magistrates of Dijon frown somewhat, he exiled himself in the train of a financier on his travels. This man had offered him two hundred livres a year to copy verses. "I am well content if the verses are good."—"If the verses are good," exclaimed the financier. "Good indeed! there is no doubt of it, for they are my own." Piron resigned himself. From the very first, things went on badly. "You did not tell me, monsieur, what was the length of your verses. I have never seen such long ones."—"You are a pedant." Piron contented himself with here and there resetting a verse on its feet with some little rhyme and reason, but without saying a word about it. The poetical financier did not make any complaints. But unluckily this old fool had a female second cousin in his train, who was pretty enough and coquettish enough, and who wanted nothing more than to blossom and bloom. Piron commenced with her by a little Anacreontic story. Much did the second cousin care for poetry! Instead of slipping the love story into her bosom she threw it into the fireplace of a room at a hotel, and at the time of leaving, thanks to an officious valet who did not know how to read, the verses of the lover were placed in the hands of the financier. Piron did not think it best to go farther—he gayly abandoned for

tune and love, and again took the road toward the paternal roof, in company with his friend Sarrazin, who afterward became celebrated at the Théâtre Français. Sarrazin had just been playing comedy in a strolling company. The journey was charming. If we may believe Dr. Procope, the poet and comedian, finding themselves without resources at the inn of a little Burgundian village, the two determined to perform a tragedy in five acts. Oh, profanation! they mutually agreed on *Andromache*. This tragedy was therefore announced with all the flourish of trumpets the place afforded. The great day arrives—the theatre, which is fitted up in a ball-room, is filled in less than an hour. “We are playing for great stakes,” said Piron; “let us not lose the game.” The curtain rises, the comedian bows to the audience. “Gentlemen, the actors are dressing—in the meantime we will give you a specimen of our art, a little comedy which we have composed.” No sooner said than an innkeeper’s girl appears, who serves a most copious supper, our two adventurers take seats at the table, all the while cajoling the girl who sits down beside them. They commence an interminable discussion on love and women, on the follies and vanities of the world, the whole moistened with generous wine. At first the Burgundians knew not how to take all this; but soon seeing the merry rascals with so good an appetite and so thirsty, they entered into the spirit of it. An Homeric laugh rings through the room—every one becomes merry. The comedian and the poet redouble their spirit and sallies, to say nothing of their bumpers; there was nothing even to the simplicity of the maid of the inn which did not

inspire them. In fine the triumph was a magnificent one. Never had the Burgundians taken so good a lesson in philosophy. Everybody departed contented, and the two philosophers passed the night under the table as a full completion of the lecture.

On his return to Dijon, our gay adventurer abandoned himself to pleasure with fatal indolence, saying with Tibullus: "It is in this that I am a good chief and a good soldier." In truth, he had nothing to do. He carelessly awaited fortune, but fortune withdrew further than ever from the threshold of the apothecary. For the sake of something to do, he entered the office of an attorney, whence he levelled epigrams against all the people of Dijon who were at all celebrated. His father himself was not spared; the poor apothecary was represented, spectacles on nose, armed from head to foot, offering battle to Apollo, who turned his back upon him. It was about this time that Piron joined the archers of Beaune. In the eighteenth century, the gentlemen of Beaune were not all men of wit. Piron found it a barren soil, if not for Bacchus, at least for Apollo. It was a fertile field for epigram; but a joke to be intelligible to them, must needs be broad. Piron dressed up a jackass as an archer, and dragged him by main force to the training-ground. "Here," says he, "is one of the company whom I met as I came along."—The animal began to bray, and the archers looked at one another with vexation, like people who have let their secret be found out. In the evening, all the archers except the jackass went to the theatre. As the actors spoke somewhat low, the spectators began to cry, "Louder, louder; we can't hear!"—"It is not for want of ears,"

exclaimed Piron. The indignant audience threw themselves on the poet, who made his escape with the greatest difficulty in the world, exclaiming, "Alone I could whip them all."—In sober earnest, twenty rusty swords were drawn upon him. The next day, as he returned to Dijon, he mowed down vigorously all the thistles which he found along the road. Some of the people of Beaune meeting him slashing away in this manner, asked, "What are you about?"—"Par-blen! I am at war with the inhabitants of Beaune, and am cutting off their provisions!"—The war lasted a long time; it was as celebrated as the battle of Fontenoy. To this day, the gentlemen of Beaune do not relish pleasantry on the subject.

II.

Piron's gayety, however, slipped away little by little with his youth. His star had not, so far, been brilliant. Over thirty, he found himself without resources, without hopes, not knowing what to do. Indolence, so pleasant and careless in the spring-time of life, when we saunter along on the greensward, or on the fallen rose-leaves, when we can gather a bouquet of wild flowers on every path, when Margot or Joan opportunely pass along the road—indolence becomes a galling chain at the harvest-time. Poor Piron saw with vexation the ripening ears he could not reap. He began to regret his wasted prime, and with the noble ardor for labor which was seriously enkindled in his soul, he set out for Paris, the oasis of his poetic dreams. Alas, he found Paris a desert! "Behold, then, my bark in the midst of an unknown sea, the sport of the winds, the waves, and the rocks!"

It leaked on all sides, and I was about to sink when poetry came, whether for good or ill, to my aid. It was my last plank; but I did not know what kind of plank it was."—He knew well that it was a plank of safety; but before touching dry land, the plank floated far over the agitated waters.

Behold him at length at Paris with no other baggage than his wits. I forgot—he had letters of recommendation; but these, he remarked, were not notes payable at sight. Rebuffed at the very first, it was in anger he made a bonfire of the rest. As one of these letters would not burn, he augured something good from it, and therefore took it to its address, that is to say, to the Chevalier de Belle Isle. The chevalier was on the look-out for copyists to transcribe his interminable memoirs. He did not condescend to allow Piron to be presented to him.—“Let him present his handwriting and not his person to me.”—“He was permitted,” says a critic, “thanks to his good hand, to copy this tiresome trash, at forty sous a day, in a dilapidated garret, having a soldier in the French Guards for a neighbor. At the end of six months’ steady toil, he had not yet received anything of his moderate stipend. He hit upon the idea of writing a petition in verse, and fastening it to the collar of a favorite dog of the chevalier’s. On a second attempt, he was disdainfully paid, without their appearing to suppose that the verses came from him. There was not a single one, down even to the secretary of the chevalier, who did not look down upon him; but the poor poet was soon revenged; this secretary came one evening, with three or four of his friends to the garret where Piron was copying,

to read to them a tragedy which he had written. Piron listened in his corner. At the end of the piece, after considerable applause from three or four of his friends, Piron joined in the conversation without asking permission, and criticised all the scenes like a man of wit and sense. The author carried off his friends, without saying a word, but soon returning alone to the garret, offered his hand to Piron, and said with emotion, "Monsieur, I thank you for having opened my eyes; after what you said, I had but one course to pursue; that was to burn my tragedy. I come to you with clean hands."—There are still at the present day critics of good sense and good faith; but are there still authors who throw their pieces in the fire?

This brave fellow set to work to find a career for the talents of Piron. Le Sage and Fuselier had lost their brilliancy at the *Opéra Comique*; their genius began to show the effects of old age. People began to complain of always hearing the same song. Piron appeared there at a fortunate moment; he seized with a bold hand the sceptre of broad humor. His first farces, however, were not very happy.—"At that time," said he, when eighty, after a good-natured retrospect of the past, "I made comic operas every night which failed every day."—A decree was meanwhile issued at the suit of the *Théâtre Français*, which reduced the *Opéra Comique* to a single speaking actor. How was that to be got over pleasantly? Piron accomplished it by a master-piece of wit, satire, and philosophy, of comic opera. For this master-piece, *Harlequin Deucalion*, he was paid six hundred livres. Deucalion, the only mortal escaped

from the Deluge, was a capital character for a piece in which there could be but one speaker. Piron introduced among his actors Punch and the parrot; these could speak in spite of the decree, which had not thought of them. The poet afterward puts Pyrrha, Apollo, Cupid, the Muses, and Pegasus, on the stage, who play their parts well, and express their thoughts by airs, songs, and symbols. Who could fail to recognize Pegasus by his asses' ears, and his turkeys' wings? This monologue had an incredible success; it contained scenes of real comedy, an indescribably-strong flavor of the *Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, and the *Médecin malgré lui*. The laughs were on the side of Piron against the actors of the *Théâtre Français*, who could not find a better mode of revenge than by ordering a piece from the poet. Crébillon the Tragic, was their ambassador; but success intoxicates and confuses the mind; Piron believing himself called to high dramatic destinies, set laboriously to work to produce a lachrymose comedy, *Les Fils Ingrats*. Would you believe it? this counterfeit gayety, which sticks so close to tragedy, has been bequeathed to us by Piron, for Nivelles came after Piron.

The comedy had but a partial success. Piron fell from the summit of his illusions, and found himself again in his garret, poor as usual. Poetry never visits poets in garrets, but in their blooming days of youth. Now Piron was thirty-five, with no money in his pocket, nor love in his heart. Some small change in the one; some loose amour in the other. The poor poet had always cause to complain of fortune and of love. The one came to him under the

disguise of alms: the other of some actress, without hearth or home, who had left her heart amid the tinsel of the stage. Once only was Piron's heart seriously interested; it was for Mademoiselle Chéré, who, although an actress, was still a woman. Piron sighed for six weeks; he almost made an elegy; he wrote a pretty epistle; the cruel one ended by relenting; so that at the end of six weeks, the happy hour struck for Piron. Behold him making his way with a beating heart to the dwelling of the fair! He, though so fond of his supper, did not think of supper that night. He rang, was admitted, and ushered into a boudoir which dazzled him. Scarce had he entered, when the fair Chéré appeared, in a charming *deshabille*.—"Is it you, Bimbin? I did not expect you so soon."—"I know very well that it is not yet eleven; but what would you have me do? my legs would keep pace with my heart. Ah, you mischievous girl, let me kiss those rognish hands! But you are uneasy."—"Yes; the chevalier was to come at ten; he sent me this morning twenty-five louis; he is in a fair way to ruin himself for me. I begin to pity him. Now he does not like you; for he knows I have a weakness for versifiers. If he comes, talk to me before him of some pretended mistress; appear to be indifferent to me; he will go away contented without boring us too long. That was a ring, was it not? It is he. Have done, Bimbin, and amuse yourself with poking the fire."—The chevalier, who was a Poitevin gentleman, soon entered, pirouetting, and humming an opera-tune. At the sight of Piron, carelessly stretched on a lounge, he frowned and rattled his sword.—"Monsieur,"

said he, getting excited, "you are not here, I imagine, for the love of God; I am not altogether a simpleton. I gave madame twenty-five louis to-day. You must give me as much or be off."—"You are losing your wits!" exclaimed the actress; "twenty-five louis! don't you know that he is a poet?"—Piron, for the first time in his life, could make no answer.—"The fellow is very reasonable," said he to himself; "it appears that here one pays as he goes; as I have not a sou, I will be off."—He took up his hat and departed.

Another time, Piron was almost in love with Mademoiselle Leconvreur, but it was again a failure. But we at least owe to it a pretty epistle:

TO MADEMOISELLE LECOUVREUR,

Who played the part of Angelica in my comedy of *L'Ecole des Pères*.

A sculptor, one of ancient date,
 And the Coustou of his day,
 A Venus made, of charms so great,
 So great, they led his mind astray.
 "Venus," he with fervor prayed,
 "Thy glory only gave me skill!
 To my devotion lend thy aid,
 Breathe life here by thy potent will!"
 Venus to his prayer lent ear:
 With life the marble 'gan to move.
 Before his wond'ring eyes appear
 An idol, not a thing of love.
 Soon his passion was returned;
 A thousand envied him his bliss,
 That bliss supreme, by genius earned,
 The world is all alike in this.
 Shepherds upon the trees inscribe
 The story that I just have told;

And let this truth your hearts imbibe,
 That love moves stone, now, as of old.
 * * * * *
 Sweet Lecouvreur, to this my tale
 Let me a new allusion make.
 Angelica's my work of art,
 And you with life have bid it move;
 My fable which is true in part,
 Would all be true, would you but love.

But the fair Lecouvreur would not.

Piron consoled himself for love and fortune in the company of those joyous apostles of the gay story and the merry song, who founded that celebrated academy of mirth, the Cave. Piron was by no means the worst boon-companion; he was wit personified. Grimm has said of him, "he was a machine of sallies, points, and epigrams." On close examination, his jokes were seen to crowd together in his head, burst out like a rocket, and bolt out of his mouth by the dozen. In word-combats, he was the stoniest athlete who ever existed. His repartee was always more terrible than the attack. This was why M. de Voltaire was as afraid of Piron as of fire.

I shall pass over the epigrams of Piron on Voltaire in silence; Piron had the best of it; but I would not willingly forget this little scene at the chateau of the Marquis of Mimenre. The marquis liked Piron; the marchioness Voltaire; hence they sometimes met at the same door. One morning, Piron found Voltaire alone at the fire-place of the saloon, stretched at his ease in a great arm-chair, with legs extended on each side, and feet resting on the andirons. Piron bowed five or six times, to indicate that he wanted his place by the fire; Voltaire

answered by a slight nod; Piron bravely seized an arm-chair, and reposed it beside the hearth; Voltaire took out his watch, Piron his snuff-box; the one took the tongs, the other snuff; the one blew his nose, the other sneezed; Voltaire, getting tired, began to gape with all his might; Piron, elated, began to laugh; Voltaire drew a crust from his coat-pocket, and crunched it between his teeth with an incredible noise; Piron, without losing time, returned to the attack: he found a flask of wine in his pocket, and drank it slowly with a most bacchanalian smack. At this M. de Voltaire took offence.—“Monsieur,” said he to Piron, in a dry tone, and with the air of a grand signor, “I understand raillery as well as another; but your pleasantry, if it is such, passes the limits.”—“Monsieur, it is so far from a pleasantry, that my flask is empty.”—“Monsieur,” replied Voltaire, “I have recently come out of a sickness which has left me with a continual desire to eat, and I eat.”—“Eat, Monsieur, eat,” said Piron; “it is perfectly right; for my part, I have come out of Burgundy with a continual desire to drink, and I drink.”

I can not forget either the joke which Voltaire took to heart so long: it is a part of literary history. Voltaire was reading *Semiramis* to a circle of auditors, among whom was Piron. The tragedy contained a good many verses from Corneille and Racine. Every time one came from the lips of Voltaire, Piron made a very low bow with the greatest seriousness. At last Voltaire, out of patience and observing a mocking smile on everybody's lips, asked Piron the reason of his bowing. The Burgundian poet immediately replied, without any appearance of

premeditation, "Keep on, monsieur, don't mind me; it is merely because it is my practice to salute my acquaintances." *Semiramis* was played some time after, with very little success. Voltaire, meeting Piron in the lobby, asked him what he thought of his tragedy. "I think you would like very well for me to have been the author." The charming part of all Piron's repartees was, that he was cunning and malicious, without appearing to be so.

At that time, Piron went occasionally into society, dining here and there at a great mansion. He knew very well that it was his wit which was invited; as he said, "They hire me on wages." He went everywhere without bending the knee. One day, at the house of some marquis, whom I have forgotten, a nobleman made way for him, to enter the dining-room before him. The marquis observing this ceremony, addressed the nobleman: "Oh, Monsieur the Count, don't be so ceremonious; he is only a poet." Piron repelled the insult like a man of spirit. He raised his head proudly, and went in first, saying, "Since our titles are known I take my rank."

Piron, bewildered by a failure and a triumph together, took it into his head that his forte was tragedy. He completed *Callisthène*, but *Callisthène* fell dead at once. Every poet has displayed some peculiar characteristic on the stage. Corneille, grandeur and heroism; Racine, passion; Crebillon, terror; Voltaire, philosophy or humanity. Piron wanted to take his place in the sunshine of genius; he brought on the stage the gigantic and the strange, with the idea that "the highest gift of tragedy is to excite admiration." Thus in *Callisthène*, Alexander is

only a cruel tyrant, because a philosopher does not choose to adore him as a god. Lysimachus fights with a lion; Leonidas devotes himself to death, that Alexander may have a crime the more on his soul. "To make this piece succeed," Voltaire said, before Piron's epigrams, "it would be necessary that all the spectators should be like Cato or Socrates." Here Voltaire is more polite. *Callisthène*, which is a profanation of history, fell before the good sense of the spectators. According to Piron, the following incident was the true cause of the failure of the tragedy. The poignard, with which Callisthène was to pierce his bosom, was in such bad condition that the hilt, guard, and blade, all came apart, so that the actor received the weapon by piecemeal from the hands of Lysimachus. A general laugh arose at the fatal moment, when the actor stabbed himself, holding the fragments openly in his hand. "Everybody laughed but the make-believe dying man and myself. This was the true poignard stroke which slew my poor *Callisthène*." This is, however, a real poet's reason.*

Piron wanted to revenge himself for these two failures by another tragedy. He was an obstinate poet who never was willing to abandon his ground. He composed *Gustave Wasa*, which will keep its place if not on the stage, at least in his works. *Gustave* is the entire history of the Swedish revolutions. Never before the modern melo-drama were so many

* Piron, who often had to complain of the actors, exclaimed one day, "Really those rascals there would make the Scripture itself fail if they played it, and yet it is a piece which has kept its ground for seventeen hundred years."

tragic incidents combined in one piece. "Among so many events," says Piron in his preface, "there could not fail to spring up a number of those brilliant occurrences called by the neologists dramatic situations, which are always well received on the modern horizon of our theatres." In fact only taking the fifth act of *Gustave*, you would have enough to make fifty tragedies on the old pattern. In this pell-mell of passions and incidents, in this chaos illumined here and there by rays of light, there are certainly pathetic scenes, bursts of grandeur, noble thoughts, fine verses. The inspiration of the great Corneille has, sometimes, descended even to Piron.

Fernand Cortès followed *Gustave Wasa*. This heroic tragedy was badly received. It was a bad conception of Piron to throw the interest *nolens volens* upon the Spaniards. Why make Montezuma an imbecile who kisses the hands which enchain him, the foolish slave of his people and his enemies, arming himself for both, a lover paralyzed by an Elvira who despises him, and whose eyes—

"Like to proud conquerors, disdain their conquest!"

For Piron Mexico was merely the promised land of the Spaniards. While awaiting these glorious missionaries this beautiful country was only a poor corner of the world, getting along as it could, without God, without laws, without arts. Here, however, is a terrible contradiction. Do you know why this messiah, Fernand Cortes, came? For the sake of the fair eyes of Elvira. Instead of a messiah, we have only a knight-errant, an adventurous paladin, who sets out to discover a world for the honor of his

lady, who fights as a hero out of simple gallantry. I am well pleased that love should scatter his flowers through a tragedy, but I do not wish them to bury up its heroes.

III.

The *Café Procope* during the last century was, as you know, the best literary gazette in Paris. The contributors were Desfontaines, Fréron, Duclos, Carle, Vanloo, Marivaux, Boucher, Rameau, Crébillon, La Tour, Piron. During a long period, the latter was chief editor. The strife was, who should have a corner of his table, a spark of his wit. Picture to yourself a modern Hercules, a head covered with thick locks, a half-closed eye, a benign countenance, a mouth with the corners satirically turned up, a tolerably-expensive dress (Piron piqued himself a little on his elegance, and was at times disposed to play the fine gentleman), a shirt-frill which had already done duty at a city dinner, and over all this a certain indescribable air of chagrin and weariness, and you will have before you Piron at the *Café Procope*.—"It is surprising," said Doctor Procope, "that so gay a mind should dwell in so gloomy a lodging."—A greater physiognomist than the doctor would have discovered what was the matter with Piron. The poor man was fatigued and confused with the harlequinades of his mind. He no longer took any interest in those somewhat grotesque witticisms which he broached for the amusement of Parisian cockneys and literary loungers. His poetical nature took offence every moment at his buffconery. This was the reason he wrote tragedies; but it was of no use; he could not

propitiate the tearful muse; the poet could not dethrone the buffoon. And besides, Piron was poor, always poor, and, even if we are poets, we bear in the end with difficulty the dark mantle of poverty. Moreover, Piron was alone, and nothing is so bitter as the solitude of Paris, the solitude of a garret, of a fireless hearth, of a window without the sun; nothing so bitter as the sight of that deserted threshold which misery alone has crossed. A hand for ever blessed, but which was always concealed, that of the Marquis de Lassay, paid every year five hundred livres to the attorney of Piron, but this was the best part of the poet's income; the publishers and the actors did not give him as much. Piron, when thinking over the *Métromanie*, had not a single crown for the day's expenses. Gilbert was never reduced to so little, and yet Gilbert was never abandoned by love, like Piron. Alas! not a single mistress in all this distress; not a single white hand to come and support this heavy brow; never a gown or a petticoat on that wretched bed; never a sympathizing heart to console this poor heart of his, which groaned in silence; never a bouquet to perfume this sad chamber; never a tender look, to revive sunken hope; never a single kiss for all these hidden tears! Do not talk any more to me of the misery of Gilbert: that grief had only the duration of a dream of pride and anger. But the grief of Piron! God knows how lingering and pitiless it was; how it assumed all forms to torture him! In the evening, it followed him step by step to his chamber, or rather he found it crouched upon his hearth.—“Good even, mine host,” said she to him, giving him an icy hand: “so you have

spent your crown and your epigram. Ah, old prodigal that you are, why did you not reserve five sons for a fagot, or bring home some compassionate girl with you, who would have driven away the winter of your garret? You pass for a wit, but you are nothing but a fool, Monsieur Piron. See Voltaire and all the rest, how they have got ahead of you. At the theatre your tragedies are hissed; garlands are thrown on theirs; in society they are grandes; you are but a playhouse drudge; they have mistresses, where are yours? they throw money out of the window—make your purse jingle a little; they belong to the Academy, you would have a very ill reception there. All that you have got at Paris has been your gray hairs. What have you got to say to that, my poor Burgundian poet?" Piron's sole response is weepingly to retire to his sorry couch. In the morning, he seeks some rhymes from his muse, a story, an epistle, a scene from a comedy; but the muse is most frequently chilled in this poor chamber of the Rue-St.-Thomas-du-Louvre, before a few pieces of old lodging-house furniture, in the neighborhood of an old woman and a parrot. When Piron opens the window, to relieve his weariness, the rhyme, already rebellious, escapes through it; he descends in pursuit; but it is not without trouble that he catches it again, sometimes at the corner of a street, sometimes at a friend's fire-side.

In this sorry dwelling, where M. de Buffon and M. Voltaire would not have been able to breathe one hour, or write one line, Piron was nevertheless visited by some celebrated personages; but pity, pity poor Piron! The nobleman who would have honored

himself in honoring the poet, spoilt his action by an alms unworthy of a nobleman and of a poet: on leaving, he deposited, a few louis on the chimney-piece! Only one nobleman—but that one was a great writer, Montesquieu—visited Piron without giving him alms!

At last, after five years' obstinate perseverance, the *Métromanie*, refused at first by the actors, obtained the honors of the stage and the applause of the spectators. Piron is not the sole author of this comedy; the celebrated Mademoiselle Quinault, who had gained an ascendancy over his mind, gave him good advice after the first reading. She did it so well that Piron recast the entire piece. "Patience, patience," said she to him at the second reading; "it will be a masterpiece; but you must remodel twenty scenes; give more love to the lovers; more reality to the *Capitou* (an officer of Toulouse); more liveliness to the first act, for in a comedy it will not do to wait until the fifth act for a laugh. Take out those uncouth rhymes and those vulgar sentences; omit those somewhat antiquated jokes; read over the *Femmes Savantes*, and I predict that all will go well—I, who would be shocked at being a '*femme savante*' myself. Patience is genius." The reason which falls from a pretty mouth is always listened to. The *Métromanie* is the work of patience, good counsel, and talent, but not of genius. I shall, perhaps, cause offence if I speak with sincerity, if I undertake to appeal against the unanimous verdict of the eighteenth century, which has proclaimed the *Métromanie* to be the greatest masterpiece of comedy. No; the *Métromanie* is not a masterpiece; it is a charming comedy in the

best style, in which there is gayety of the true stamp, vividly-colored pictures, good scenes, sharp satire, verses worthy of Molière, points of Regnard; but there is still a void in this piece; that void is a want of human nature that is not made sufficiently apparent. Piron's first idea of the *Métromanie* was merely an epigram on Voltaire. The occasion is known. A mischievous poet of Brittany, named Desforges Maillard, published his verses in the *Mer-cure*, over the signature of Mademoiselle Malerais de la Vigne. Voltaire, caught in this snare, the first of the wits, responded to the coquetry of the Breton by verses to Chloris, perfumed madrigals, gallant epistles. It was soon known with whom the poet had to do. Piron made an epigram; the epigram gave birth to a piece in one act, and at last from this act sprang the *Métromanie*. There is a curious book to be written on the history of the ideas working in the minds of poets.

Success consoled Piron a little in his sorrow, but success at fifty comes a little late. And with success, there was also bitter criticism, and soon, thanks to critics, actors, jealous authors, the *Métromanie* was consigned to oblivion. Three months after the representation Piron wrote, "I see well that I can do nothing more in the world until after I am dead." Bergerac, in the age of quibbles, would have said here, "I must die, so as not to be buried;" or, "I am a dead man if I live always."

He was none the richer; but if fortune did not follow glory, glory leads love in her footsteps. Love at fifty! Better late than never, says the wisdom of nations. So one evening after supper, Piron was

ruminating on I know not what in Gallet's shop (Gallet, the gay song-writer, the merry tippler, was, besides and above all, a grocer), when a damsel entered, who asks for coffee and matches. Gallet having gone out, Piron undertook to serve the demoiselle. "Is that all you want?" Gallet, entering at that moment, laughingly said, "Mademoiselle ought to have a husband in the bargain."—"Excellent," said Piron, "if the damsel will take up with any kind of wood for her arrow." The demoiselle blushed, and departed without saying a word.

The next morning Piron had scarcely risen when she entered his chamber. "Monsieur," said she, all in a tremor, "we are two children of Burgundy. I have long wanted to see a man of so much wit, and having learned yesterday that it was you with whom I had to do in M. Gallet's shop, I have come to-day unceremoniously to pay you a visit. Oh, monsieur, how weary you must grow here. I was very much afraid of finding some handsome lady from the theatre here; but, God be praised, you live like a Trappist. Have you never thought of making an end of this, Monsieur Piron?" Piron, completely stunned by this talk, answered, "Alas, mademoiselle, I leave the care of that to *La Cumarde*, but, if you please, what do you mean by that?"—"I wish to say, have you ever thought of marriage?"—"Not much, mademoiselle; pray sit down while I light the fire." "You don't know, Monsieur Piron? it will make you laugh; so much the worse; I shall speak plainly. If your heart has the same sentiments as mine..." Piron, more and more astonished, looked at the lady in silence—"In a word, Monsieur Piron, I come to

offer you my heart and my hand, not forgetting my life annuity of two thousand livres."

Piron, contrary to his custom, took all this seriously; he was touched to find at last a compassionate soul; the young girl had tears in her eyes; he embraced her with warmth. "I leave to you," said he to her, "all the preparations for the wedding. Gallet will write our epithalamium."—"You see me, Monsieur Piron, the happiest girl in the world. I did not hope for so happy a conclusion, for—I do not wish to conceal anything from you—I am—I am fifty-three."—"Well, then," said Piron, with a slight shrug, "we have over a hundred years between us. We would have done well to have met sooner."

You see that Love played Piron all sorts of tricks; he deserted him in the best days of his life, when he might have appeared to him on a path strewed with spring roses, in the sweet and merry company of the graces, to the music of the pipes of the lively and smiling Erato; and to complete his mockery, Love came to visit the poet under the frowning aspect of an ancient maiden, when the poet was only expecting death.

The marriage went off gayly enough. This old maid was good-natured; she was a devoted sister, friend, and servant, to Piron. He became so habituated to seeing her make the coffee in the morning, to hearing her graceful prattle in the chimney corner, he was so charmed with the enthusiasm she had for his writings, that he avowed himself the happiest of husbands. He was no longer alone; he was no longer reduced to a single crown a day, and could refuse to go out to dinner when the weather was bad; he could

now and then buy a comedy of Molière, and a tragedy of Corneille ; he could in his turn give alms, not on a chimney-piece, but at the corner of the street ; he could at last receive his friends at his own hearth, like a grandee. One must have felt the want of a crown to comprehend this prosaic happiness of the poet.

But there is no happiness so humble but that it has its reverse ; the good old wife of Piron was struck with paralysis five years after marriage ; she lingered for five more in this condition ; she died, carrying with her the bitter regrets of Piron, and the two thousand livres annuity. Will it be believed ? never did a husband weep more sincerely the death of his wife.

The poor poet did not remain alone ; thanks to a niece who came to him out of compassion, not knowing moreover where else to go. This niece was Piron's last support. He was almost blind ; she led him everywhere, without complaining of his whims ; she wrote out his verses, read to him those of others ; in a word, was his second sight.

Every year Collé, Panard, Gallet, and the rest of the joyous band, celebrated Piron's birthday. The one which occurred two years before his death was the most delightful of his life. From the break of day, verses and bouquets showered in upon him, and old friends and songs revived his sunken gayety. They had crowned him, in spite of himself, with roses, myrtles, and laurels. "I still think that I see and hear him," says Dussault ; "he was Anacreon—he was more, he was Pindar." Suddenly, a newly-arrived guest approached near Piron ; farewell to

verses and bouquets, to songs and crowns. The new-comer was a sad, proscribed man, a soul in pain, an unfortunate genius, a man for ever celebrated ; it was J. J. Rousseau ! Piron seized Jean Jacques' hand, placed it upon his heart with a cry of joy, and with a stentorian voice, raised the *Nunc dimittis servum tuum, Domine !*—"So it is you at last, my dear Rousseau ! Oh, thou man of head and heart ! And so the barbarians have burnt your *Emile*. So much the better ; the incense of such a holocaust must needs have delighted the angels ! But how came you to think of coming to see me, for you are far from going everywhere ? Is it to contrast wisdom with folly ? By-the-by, do you pardon me for those epigrams ? What would you have ? my wine is sharp—"—"I do more," interrupted Rousseau ; "I am waiting for others, joyous nursling of Bacchus ; spoilt child of the Muses ! Be always the same ; always Piron ! You were born mischievous, you were never wicked !"

Piron replied, and for an hour there was a dazzling display of fireworks. Never had his wit thrown off a more brilliant shower of bon-mots. Jean Jacques never returned.—"You will return," said Dussault to him, as they descended the stairs.—"No," he answered, "this steady fire fatigues and dazzles me ; I am all out of breath. What a man ! It is a Pythia on its tripod !"—"Ah, my friends !" exclaimed Piron, as soon as Jean Jacques had gone, "pardon me these tears : you see I am weeping like an infant." Piron was a man of sensibility.

In 1735, the Academy was desirous of honoring in a worthy manner the glory of Piron. He was unani-

mously elected * without having made the usual visits. M. de Bougainville, who presented himself for admission, did not neglect the visits.—“I was under the impression,” said Montesquieu, “that you were making the visits for Piron.”—“What are your claims?” asked Duclos.—“A parallel between Alexander and Thamas Khouli-Khan.”—“We have not read it.”—“But, monsieur, I have another claim: I am dying!”—Duclos smiled, and replied, “Do you consider the Academy in the light of extreme unction?” This M. de Bougainville with the old Bishop of Mirepoix made war on Piron. He prepared the arms; the old prelate went to the king, Louis XV., to remind him that Piron had been guilty of a masterpiece of libertinism. “I beg you, sire, to refuse your sanction to this act of the Academy.”—Madame de Pompadour took up the defence of Piron, but the devotees were so determined, that the king had not the force to resist; so the name of Piron was for ever erased from that famous list. After that day, he wrote his epitaph, the most celebrated of epitaphs.†

As soon as Montesquieu learned the king's refusal, he repaired to the court, and advocated the claims of Piron with so much eloquence that the king at once signed an order for a pension of a thousand livres for the aged poet. Madame de Pompadour added five hundred more from her pocket-money. The Count

* Before voting, the claims of Piron were canvassed. Fontenelle, nearly deaf, and almost a hundred years old, asked La Chaussée what was going on. The latter took a piece of paper, on which he wrote, “They are discussing M. Piron. We are all agreed that he well merits the chair; but he has written his *Ode*, that *Ode* you know of.”—“Oh, yes,” said Fontenelle; “if he has written it, he must be well lectured, but if he has not done it, he can not be admitted.”

† “Here lies Piron, who was nothing, not even an Academician!”

de St. Florentin and the Marquis de Livry followed this good example; so that Piron suddenly recovered his annuity of two thousand livres, which had ceased with the life of his wife. In addition, he regularly received the anonymous pension of M. de Lassay, and, besides, his receipts from the sale of his works and his plays averaged a thousand livres a-year; so that he was almost rich.* Do you know then what he did? He turned devotee! As a first sacrifice—I will not say to God, but to his confessor—he burnt a bible, the margins of the pages of which he had enlivened with lamentations and epigrams in his peculiar style. He then set himself to translating the psalms and writing odes on the Last Judgment. He said in relation to this, “It is better to preach from the ladder of the gallows than not to preach at all.”—This edifying old age opened the doors of the religious world to him; he was even received by the Archbishop of Paris; but the archbishop was not thereby secure against the epigrams of the poet. One day, in presence of a large company, the archbishop said to him with a nonchalance which betrayed some little vanity, “Well, Piron, have you read my charge?”—“No, monseigneur, have you?”

All are not austere who wish to be. Piron in spite of himself, was lively until death. Like Voltaire, he lived to be eighty-three and a-half. His father had sung his birth; poets were found to sing his death. Imbert composed a lachrymose elegy on the subject, which would have heartily amused the defunct. His niece was full of love and solicitude for

* Besides these, Madame Geoffrin sent him, as a new-year's gift, his stock of sugar and coffee for the entire year.

him. Although he had become stone-blind, he always saw clear through his niece's eyes ; however, Nanette having married Capron, the musician, concealed the marriage from him out of regard for his feeble state, fearing that he might think that, since she was married, she might consequently some time neglect or abandon him. For three years she received her husband every day at the old man's table, fancying that Piron was not aware of his presence ; but Piron knew all, and said to his friends, "Nanette has the parcel ; I shall have a hearty laugh after my death." This parcel was his will, which commenced with this line : "*I declare my niece, Madame Capron, my sole and entire heir.*"—This is worth more than all his jokes.

Poor Burgundian poet ! Love did not find him out until the age when one no longer loves ; and fortune only visited him in time to enable him to have something to bequeath.

IV.

Piron is one of the original men of the eighteenth century. He has not distorted his face to make himself resemble this man or that. Alexis Piron he was born ; and, Alexis Piron, died. He had great compassion for those sorry rhymesters such as Lenièvre or La Harpe, who sometimes steal success, thanks to a certain family likeness with Voltaire or Racine, which they gain by copying a line here and a scene there.—"I have," said he, "more right to be proud of a failure than they have of a success."—A profound study of the Burgundian poet reveals many bold attempts in the domain of art. In the first place, Piron wished, by a somewhat hazardous conflict be-

tween the different human passions, to bring a smile on the lips and a tear in the eye at the same time. Men's minds, however, were then but ill prepared to agree with the innovator. They thought it very ill-advised of him to desire to overthrow the barriers placed between Molière and Corneille. The scheme has since been tried with more success, but it is well to remember the attempt of Piron. In the second place, in *Harlequin Deucalion*, the poet has brought in play all the charms of fancy. He dared to be a poet at his ease, fearless and unshackled. Rameau, the author of the music of *Harlequin Deucalion*, took, he said, a *magnificent* delight in the representations of this little masterpiece; and there is in truth much magnificence in its composition. If we could blot out a few vulgarisms, it would be one of the most charming and fanciful conceptions in French literature. Finally, Piron has somewhat renovated rhyme; he allowed himself, to the great scandal of the Abbé Desfontaines, to put *pirates* and *soupirâtes*, *mai* and *charmé*, in juxtaposition; in his songs he rhymes twelve times in *oe* and twelve times in *vent*, without stopping. Moreover, Piron has not always regarded the *cesura*, and has without ceremony allowed the sense of a line to pass into the next. We must, above all, be grateful to Piron, for having attempted at a time when an affected jargon prevailed, to bring again into favor the ancient French verse, bequeathed by Marot. Unfortunately, Piron was more vulgar than simple. However, one can not deny him a piquant turn, full of boldness and freedom, a true philosophy and point, worthy of his predecessor. In the *Quenouille Merveilleuse*, he thus speaks of love:

The roguish boy, his sole delight
 Confusion, thus unwinds each night
 The thread that every day is wound ;
 This, the sisters three, in daily round,
 Must wind again without respite.

In another tale, he portrays in an agreeable manner the diverse natures which contend within us :—

My being into two natures is rent
 Some elfin sprite, upon malice intent,
 Sets them by the ears to quarrel and fight,
 While mine is the loss, and his the delight.
 Dogs and cats very much better agree
 Than these two odd natures that make up me.
 One clings to earth ; to heaven one does tend,
 Thus they bicker, thus they ever contend.
 But all my evil does not come from these ;
 A much worse evil disturbs my repose :
 A third nature comes, a decision to make
 Of the case, but's puzzled which side to take.
 Still doubting, and still quite undecided,
 Becomes, like me, in two parts divided.
 If wisdom's skill no remedy can find,
 A thousand natures will divide my mind ;
 So with the two natures now I am done ;
 I am content to be no more than one.
 Let it be understood, that, from this date,
 I'm but one nature, without any mate.

These are sufficient to characterize the manner of Piron, which has some analogy with that of Gresset. There is a little more apparent or ill-disguised labor in the first ; a little more freedom, not in the ideas, but in the verse, of the second ; in both the same general features, the same clouded sky, the same limited horizon. The parallel might be pushed far between these two poets who lived and shone at the same time, pretty much in the same way, who were

irreligious in their youth, devotees in their last days, and authors of two of the four comedies of their age. We should find an analogy almost as striking in the details of their lives and works; but I leave the tracing out of it to others. I wish also, in passing, to contrast with that of Piron the curious face of Scarron. At first sight the two heads are illumined by a peculiar ray of gayety which I can not describe; but by degrees this deceptive gayety vanishes, its rays become effaced, and nothing is left but the reflex of the heart; and as the heart suffers you behold that gloomy sadness which hides itself and devours its tears under a forced laugh.

Piron, who wrote prose in a very original style, has passed this very queer but true judgment on his own poetry: "These are but rhymes which have been tacked to the prose which gayly circulates at the end of a repast." Like Voltaire, Piron wanted to be universal in poetry—tragedies, comedies, poems, odes, epistles, tales, eclogues, idylls, pastorals; he has tried everything in his range. If the harvest has not been abundant, he has at least gathered some golden ears which will long make him remembered.

Piron's poetry lacks scope and sunlight; he wanted the white wings of love to transport him to the celestial regions, for, without love, Piron remained with his feet nailed to the ground, cultivating his genius between four walls. His youth, moreover, had been fatal to poetry; and as is the youth, so the poet. Poetry is the mirror of the poet's youth; for poetry is a beautiful girl who does not forget. See that she sometimes thinks of heaven her former home. If the poet passes his youth in the dark, poetry will beat

her wings in the dark ; if he spends his youth in a tavern, in the train of gross pleasures, his only pursuit will be the muse of jovial humor, he will excite laughter ; but the fountain of tears is a divine fountain. If he passes his best days in love—that noble and tender love of Petrarch, that noble and passionate love of Jean Jacques—a ray from heaven will illumine his work. After love, it is solitude that is needed for the youth of the poet—that rural solitude which introduces us to the works of God ; the desert rock against which the noisy vanities of the world are broken ; the dense forest, where one hears his soul sing in the magnificent concert of the breeze, and the storm, and the leaves, and the birds ; the brow of the hill, on which the sun at his setting casts a last look. This solitude Piron never looked for ; this love Piron never found. Therefore in his poetry Nature never even shows the hem of her robe, and the heart is never there. With love and solitude the poet should combine thoughts of heaven. God himself is only a source of wit to the profane youth of Piron. When he sought God at the end of his days, it was too late, not for his soul, but for his poetry. In vain did he translate psalms with pious meditation and in serious verse ; the divine inspiration could not be translated. God loves and blesses those poets who seek him during their best days, in the full bloom of youth, in the first budding of the soul ; God perhaps is severe to those who forget him amid the vain joys of earth, who remember his name only at the threshold of the tomb, who only bow their heads before his might when beneath the snows of death.

THE ABBÉ PREVOST.

IN the time of the Abbé Prévost, abbés were agreeable pagans who lived gayly without the bounds of the church. Their interpretation of scripture differed from that of the present day. They frequented the court, the balls, the operas; they wore masks, intrigued, and said their prayers after supper. They did not trouble themselves then about keeping diaries and writing charges: the answer of Piron to the Archbishop of Paris is well known.

The Abbé Prévost was always sincere, whether with Benedictines or soldiers, whether he prayed to God or to his mistress. He represents in turn Desgrieux and Tiberge; and do not these two characters of his novel correspond with the two natures which were constantly at strife in that heart at once so great and so feeble? Desgrieux and Tiberge are action and reaction—the folly which escapes control, the reason which takes the upper hand. The novel-writer could not express the contradictions of his heart and his life but by painting himself under two contrasting figures. Some have attempted to draw a parallel between Marion de Lorme and Manon Lescaut;

they have said that Marion de Lorme was the object which the Abbé Prévost wished to delineate. They are mistaken. Marion de Lorme always knew what she was about, Manon Lescant never; the first listened to her vanity, the second only to her caprice; the mistress of Cinq Mars looked for greatness, the mistress of Desgriens only for pleasure. A more curious parallel would be that between Manon Lescant and Virginia. In the eighteenth century, the rich and gorgeous nature of the tropics was for the poets what the East is to us—an ideal zone to which our most cherished day-dreams tend. Bernardin de Saint Pierre's heroine was born in a scene similar to that in which that of the Abbé Prévost died. The two novels are connected by the same poetry of love and natural scenery. Virginia dying in all her purity is still the sister of Manon Lescant dying crowned with sullied roses, but who is saved through love.

What a poetical, romantic, and singular existence was that of the Abbé Prévost, who was thrice a Jesuit, twice a soldier, a long time an exile, always a lover, whether in the marshes of Holland, the fogs of England, the cell of the cloister, or the wine-shops of Paris! A gifted, happy, inconstant being, such as the Deity was pleased to create on a day of melancholy gayety, with more heart than head, more poetry than wit, more dreams than reflection—such are the privileges of those beautiful creations which expand in all their strength and all their splendor, flowers which bloom in a fine season, and have felt in their warm mornings the dew, the sunlight, and the storm.

For the Abbé Prévost, life was a romance and a journey. Merely to relate his history would require an entire volume; it is a task worthy of tempting a poetic mind. How many charming episodes, how many picturesque contrasts; whether, as the hero, on a fine April morning, while the birds are singing, he escapes from the convent to assume the uniform of a guardsman; or whether he returns, heart-broken by an infatuated passion, to knock at the doors of the monastery, henceforth his tomb, the saddest of tombs, that of the heart. All men here below pursue chimeras: fortune, glory, love, poetry—chimeras which have not grown old since the golden age, and which always entice us to all the dangers of the shore. Did the Abbé Prévost think of these? Manon, his dear Manon, was the personification of his chimera; she was the enchanted image ever before his eyes, whether he was singing in the guard-room, whether in revery or prayer in his cell. His chimera was a mingling of love and poetry; if he was permitted to follow her, to love her, to lose her, to love her again, he asked no more. What mattered glory and fortune to him? Manon! Manon! it was his dream, it was his life. Yes, Desgrieux was himself, he who pursued this charming image—and like the image of happiness she escaped him as soon as he seized her.

Has Manon Lescaut existed? is she a dream of the poet? is she a recollection of the lover? What a beautiful history for delicate intelligences would this be which should inform us how a book is formed: the first inspirations, and their dazzling effects, the routes chosen, the unfrequented side-paths, the happy hours of labor, the fatigues and despairs, the reviving

ardors, and at last the final pages in which the man of genius pours out his soul!

The Abbé Prévost wrote his book in London, during his exile, at the age of retrospection, at the age when one's dreams are only with the past. Manon, Lescant is a reminiscence, a reminiscence of his country, but, above all, of his heart. Do you ask for the proof? It is on every page of the book; the proof is the verity of the recital and the verity of the passion. A dreamer can never attain that. Goethe wrote Werter with a recollection of the time when he was twenty; the Abbé Prévost put his entire youth into Manon Lescant. The finest romances are made by destiny, by chance, by God himself. The proof is also to be had in every page of the life of the Abbé Prévost, who passes incessantly from Tiberge to Desgrieux, and from Desgrieux to Tiberge. But look at his history.

François Prévost d'Exiles was born in April, 1697, at Hesdin, in Artois; his father, king's *procureur*, was his first tutor. He was soon placed under the Jesuits of Hesdin, who were happy to have at their lessons a youth so mild and ingenuous, full of zeal for religion and science. When the scholar was fifteen, his father sent him to complete his studies at Paris, at the College d'Harcourt. On this first journey he met a young girl whose name is unknown; perhaps she was none other than this pretty Manon, so fresh, amiable, and lively, at the opening of the romance. You have not forgotten the charming picture of this first rencontre. The king's *procureur* wanted to make his son an abbé; the parents of the young girl were sending her to Amiens

to become a nun. But see how the future abbé met the future nun. Such are the sports of destiny. The scholar timidly advanced toward her who was already the mistress of his heart; she was very willing to postpone her entrance into the convent to the morrow, in order to have the pleasure of supping with him who discoursed so well about the tyranny of parents and the happiness of love. What was the first consequence of this meeting? Did the two young people content themselves with supping together at the hotel? The inn scene narrated farther on perhaps indicates what must have passed at this first interview. Whatever it was, Prévost arrived without much delay at the College d'Harcourt; but did the pretty girl reach the convent?

The Jesuits, astonished at the intelligence of Prévost, his gentleness, and his personal charms, caressed him, and decided him on his novitiate. His heart beat vaguely at the recollection of Manon. Her form, so fresh and smiling, appeared to him at the opening door of the world. But he had as yet only the desire for holy joys. Heaven spoke more loudly than Manon. However, one morning, when he was scarcely sixteen, Prévost, bent sadly over a folio, heard the casement shaken from the flapping of a bird's wing against it. It was a swallow, who had mistaken the window for a place to build her nest.

Nothing more was wanted to change the life of the studious scholar. He opened the window; he saw over the roofs the sky, the sun, a clump of tree-tops swayed gently by the wind. He set himself again to study; but the place in which he was, suddenly appeared so sad, so sombre, so desolate to him, that

he rushed out as if he had lost his wits. When he found himself in the street, he asked himself where he should go, with some terror at the recollection of the stern figure of his father. He said to himself that he should never dare to see him again; he did not dare even to write to him. Did he search for Manon in the labyrinth of human passions which is called Paris? He has not said so; it is allowable to doubt whether he was faithful to the recollection of his first love.

You see that the romance of life commenced early with Prévost. We have no particulars of this page of his youth. We only know that after some days of poetic vagabondizing in Paris he enlisted as a simple volunteer, hoping to make his way in the army. He conducted himself bravely, but did not achieve fortune. He took part in the last battles of Louis XIV. He saw the war ended without the hope of gaining a rank. In his impatient ardor, not wishing to remain a soldier during peace, he hurried into seclusion at La Flèche, among the Jesuit fathers. He wished to renounce the seductions and vanities of the world. Touched by the remonstrances of his father, he swore that he would henceforth live in the austere solitude of a cloister.

As long as the winter lasted, he was pleased with this life of labor and reflection. The gloom of November, the snows of January, fortified him in these wise resolves; he wished long to enjoy these austere pleasures, the perfumeless lilies gathered at the foot of the cross. But the spring returned; "I am lost," thought Prévost, as the first ray of the sun fell on his forehead. He went to confess to the

director: "My father, my heart is again open to the seductions of the world. Save me! prevent me from always listening to those deceitful joys which entice me to my ruin! I wish to live with you; to live for God in the sacred paths in which you walk!"

After this confession, Prévost connected himself by oath with the order of the Jesuit fathers. For some days, a renewed fervor inflamed his heart and mind; he composed an ode in honor of St. Francis Xavier, but the ode was scarcely finished when this fine fervor vanished. The image of Manon had returned to float before his eyes like a fairy who promises a thousand enchantments; he had heard the voice of this siren in his heart, lost amid dangerous rocks. She cried to him, "Come, come, come!" She stretched out her arms to him; she sang, and she cried again to him, "Come!" He threw himself on his knees; he leant his forehead on the marble of the altar; he pressed his lips vehemently to the crucifix, but what had they met?—the profane dreamer!—the fresh and fragrant lips of Manon!

"No!" he exclaimed, "no! I am not born to pray, but to love; the shade of the cloister is a leaden cloak too heavy for my shoulders. Oh, my God! grant me a little sunshine and a little love! It is not a shroud that my heart needs, but another heart to beat against it! And, as he said these words, he saw advancing toward him, in all the grace and attractiveness of her sixteen years, the fresh beauty with whom he had supped at Amiens.—"I will find her again," said he, stretching out his arms. Saying these words, he went out into the cloisters of the abbey. Seeing the door open, he departed, without

notifying any one. A second time he had quitted God for the world.

He had learned during his first campaign that Manon had not followed any better than himself the wishes of her parents. A soldier of Amiens had informed him that this pretty girl was at Paris, living upon the revenues of her beauty. Prévost hastened to Paris. He sought Manon everywhere ; he did not find her. What would he not have given to see her again, though but for an instant!—this charming creature, so seductive and perverse, whom he had again adorned with his poetic imagination. He again entered the service ; but this time, thanks to some patronage, he left for the war with a rank. It was the most romantic, adventurous, and singular period of his life. Some sketches and some letters of his on his soldier life have been preserved. “ Four years were passed in this business of arms ; active and susceptible to pleasure, I shall avow in the words of M. de Cambrai, that wisdom demanded many precautions which escaped me. I leave it to be supposed what must have been the heart and sentiments of a man between twenty and twenty-five who wrote *Clérelaud* at thirty-five or thirty-six.”

He long sought for Manon in vain ; Manon, his ideal, she who was to charm his eyes and speak to his heart. Not being able to find her, he sought to deceive himself : this one has her eyes : that one, her mouth ; one smiles like Manon ; the other is very like her. But it was no use for him to blind and distract himself ; his heart would not recognise them ; these wretched portraits only served to remind him of the beloved form, to make him regret her the

more. In vain did he seek to deceive his heart; true passion can not be deceived.

One day he was not thinking of her, so far was he carried away by the current of madcap adventures; he was supping at a tavern, in merry company. In a neighboring room a party were enjoying themselves in a still noisier manner. He listened to the peals of laughter, the gay speeches, the merry songs; he rose from the table, approached the door, and cast a surprised look upon the animated spectacle. Among the three or four women who were drinking and singing, he saw one more beautiful and none the less madly excited than the rest.—“It is she!” he exclaimed, pale and trembling. He entered resolutely, sword in hand, ready for anything. The men were too drunk to notice him.—“It is you, it is you!” he exclaimed, pausing before her whom he had so long sought for. The pretty girl began to laugh at the top of her voice.—“I know more than one,” answered she; “but, as for you, I don’t know who you are.”—“Ah, you do not know me!” said he, leading her to the end of the room; “and yet I have loved you more than my life! I have loved you at the foot of the cross, on the field of battle, everywhere where I have borne my heart. Alas! you do not recognise me, and I weep in finding you again!”—“You weep,” she murmured, with the air of a woman who is not accustomed to tears.—“Ah, now!” she continued mournfully; “you are not a child now!—a sword and mustaches!”—“I will not quit you,” said he, pressing her to his heart; “I will follow you everywhere, even to the end of the world! But you do not live so far off; where do you live?”—She hung down her

head, and answered with a tender voice, "Where you will."

"Alas!" thought Prévost, "she is no longer what I had dreamed; but what matter what she is? I have found her again, and I love her!"—He bore her off without any obstacle. He passed more than a year with her, in all the enchantment, all the anguish, of such a love. He had to watch his mistress sword in hand. She loved him, but she could not answer for herself, for she had acquired the habit of living without caring for aught besides pleasure. Poor Prévost more than once surprised her on the point of sacrificing him to his friends. It was of no use; she escaped from him. He doubtless wearied her with too much love. Mistresses are like the birds, who some fine morning fly through the window to sing elsewhere. On seeing the cage empty, Prévost threw up his arms in despair. "Adieu!" said he, weeping, "adieu! cruel one! naught is left me but to die." It was then that he went to the Benedictines of St. Maur.—"This sad dénouement brought me to the grave; for it is this name which I give to the honorable order among whom I buried myself, and where I remained some time so effectually dead that my friends and parents were ignorant as to what had become of me." Do not suppose that he could forget his mistress in his retreat. This siren, who had enticed him to more than one shipwreck, always sang to this weak heart, inhabited only by recollection. Pious lectures, severe austerities, ecstasies of prayer, could not detach him from this adored image.

He was but twenty-four; he held firmly until thirty-one to the plank of safety of the cloister. He then

wrote :—" I know the weakness of my heart. I must watch unceasingly. I perceive but too well of what I may again become capable, if I should lose sight a moment of discipline, or even if I should regard with the least complaisance a certain image which but too often presents itself to my mind, and which would still have but too much power to seduce me, although it is half effaced. How much it costs to fight for the victory after one has long found delight in allowing one's self to be conquered ! "

To still farther discipline his heart, he threw himself into theological disensions and severe study. He passed into all the establishments of the order : at St. Ouen of Rouen, at the Abbey du Bec, at St. Germer, at Evreux, finally at Paris, where he preached with prodigious popularity. At St. Germain-des-Prés, to distract his mind a little, and escape from himself, at least by recollection, he composed his first romance, the *Memoirs of a Man of Quality*. His brethren knew that he had passed through a stormy youth ; all came to him in the cloister evenings to relate to them some of the stories of his early life. It was a pleasure but too sweet, which he could neither refuse to others nor to himself. He was reprimanded. Not willing to acknowledge to himself that he wished a third time to abandon the cell, the Abbé Prévost asked to be transferred to some less rigid branch of the order ; he wanted a little liberty, if not complete and entire liberty. Relying on his request, he escaped premeditatedly from St. Germain-des-Prés ; the brief which he expected was not fulminated ; and fearing the consequences of this third desertion, which was more serious than the others,

he fled to England, and thence to Holland, resolved henceforth to live where it should please God, trusting to his wit and his star.

Did he see his mistress again before his departure? He has not told us. We should think not. According to one of his letters, he met near Havre a company of girls of the town, who were about to be shipped to America: this picture carried him back, in spite of himself, to his tavern amours. "Alas!" he exclaims, "we have loved more than one whom contrary winds have shipwrecked on these desert shores."

Arrived at London, he hastened to complete the *Memoirs of a Man of Quality*, which for some time furnished him with the means of subsistence. Its success surpassed all his hopes. To give a higher price to a second edition of this book, he thought of adding to it, in the form of an episode, some new history: he sought for a subject, a hero, a heroine, an intrigue, a dénouement. The image of his dear mistress was, as he himself has said, but half effaced: the farther he withdrew from her, the more did she become imbued with poetic attributes; memory has innumerable prisms, and shows only the charming side of love pictures. Here was a heroine already found—an adored portrait which he could still paint with love. For a hero he had only to paint himself. A little imagination to color the truth, and there was the romance. The scene which he had witnessed at Havre had struck him; his mind incessantly returned to it, as if he had seen there some form which was not a stranger to him: what a terrible and poetic conclusion! Did not Prévost write

his romance under the overpowering influence of his recollections? There is no use of examining his books, his journal, his letters; there is no use of consulting his Memoirs; you will stop with nothing decided on this delicate point.

What is certain is that he took his work seriously; he put his heart and his tears into it: the book completed, he did not forget it like the others; he loved it, and consulted it in his days of sorrow, as we consult a friend who knows our most cherished secret. Among other proofs of this love of the writer for his book, the criticism may be seen which the Abbé Prévost made himself on *Manon Lescant* in his journal, *Le Pour et le Contre*. "It contains nothing but pictures and reflections—but true pictures and natural sentiments. I say nothing about the style; it is Nature herself who speaks."

There is this sad feature about Paris, that in the chances of her thousand streets we meet a thousand times the form we wish to escape, and never the one we love. How many a time has the living memorial of a spring-time love been pursued in vain through the wilderness of the great city?

In the preface to a curious book, *The Continuation of the History of Manon Lescant and the Chevalier Desgrieux* (for some one, himself or somebody else, perhaps La Clos, has dared to write a continuation to this masterpiece), it is related that the Abbé Prévost, on his return to Paris, after six years of exile, after the success of *Manon Lescant*, met on the Pont Neuf, on a windy day in autumn, his first mistress, her, perhaps, whom he had piously interred in the savannahs of America. The Abbé Prévost had a

lady on his arm ; was she another and a calmer passion ? was she a friend of yesterday, some fine lady smitten with the author after having read his romance ? No one knows. All of a sudden, the first mistress passes rapidly by, without recognising him. Thinly clothed, especially for the season, she had all the trouble in the world to protect herself from the gusts of wind. The Abbé Prévost recognised her by her gait alone, although years had come sooner on her than on him ; pale and emaciated, having undergone, as Prévost says somewhere, the ravages of time and of love, she was always pretty, at least in her lover's eyes. As soon as he recognised her, he made a movement toward her, with a fearful beating of the heart. "What is the matter ?" asked the lady to whom he had given his arm. He had forgotten her for the moment. He checked himself in despair, casting a look of desolation on this fickle, charming, and unfortunate girl, who was flying before the wind to go he knew not where, nor perhaps she. What would he not have given to throw himself in her arms, and know from herself if she had remembered him during this long absence !

Why had he not on that day the force or the courage of his passion ? Doubtless he did not dare to thus represent a family scene before all the passers-by of the Pont Neuf ? Perhaps he feared to distress her who was at his side ; perhaps the hour of wisdom had at last arrived for him who had so long striven ; perhaps, in fine, he wished only to find his dear mistress, the first and the best loved, but to lose her immediately after, after having once more opened his heart to her, like those who come to gaze again with

bitter pleasure on their native land, but have no wish to dwell therein.

Why not pause here at so poetical a phase of this literary portrait? Why seek the Abbé Prévost elsewhere than in his immortal work? The whole of the Abbé Prévost is there—all his genius, all his heart. Why follow him to his other romances, and into his other years? It would be but to paint him less amiable, always writing, but without love and without reflection. Why tell you that he died of apoplexy while passing through the forest of Chantilly, like a good citizen who has acquired a rotund paunch? His destiny was, however, strange, even to the end: a physician of the village gave him a cut with a scalpel, out of love to science; the Abbé Prévost, who was only in a lethargy, revived to be present at his own death.

GENTIL-BERNARD.

FORTUNE, a little more than a century ago, amused herself by taking by the hand an amiable poet, who started out one fine morning, penniless, trusting to chance and Providence. He was the clerk of a *procureur*, named Pierre Bernard, and the son of a poor provincial sculptor. Voltaire, according to his custom, had baptized him in his peculiar fashion; he sent Bernard an invitation to supper at Madame Duchâtelet's:—

For Pindar's and Cythera's sake,
This to Gentil-Bernard I write,
" Art of Love," on Saturday night,
With " Art to Please " will supper take.

Bernard was born at Grenoble, at the same time with Louis XV. " It is strange," remarked Madame de Pompadour, at a later period, " that two lovers of quality should have been born for me in the same season—a king and a poet." Love and poetry surprised Bernard in the very morning of life. On leaving college he passed some time at the country-

house of an uncle ; there he found a Claudine to his taste. She was a pretty peasant-girl,

Whose unbound hair in careless ringlets fell,
Crowned with sweet roses, and the wild harebell.

She was the cousin and the handmaid of the curé of the parish ; if we are to trust Bernard, she dispensed with the sanction of priest as well as of notary in her tender moments. After having had an amour with Claudine, and turned off some licentious stanzas in her honor, Bernard started for Paris, the land of his dreams, where he had to ensconce himself in a lawyer's den. The Marquis de Pezay, having business in this office, was astonished on remarking the happy humor of Bernard. He was then a good-looking youngster, of magnificent figure, with a face half jocose, half reflective, "the favorite of gay grisettes." Thanks to the Marquis de Pezay (the soldier, not the poet), he made rapid advances in the world, gaining the good graces of even the most fastidious. But in the midst of this success, he departed for the Italian wars with Pezay, under the orders of the Marshal de Coigny, whose secretary he became. He fought well for a poet, but sang his combats badly. On returning from the campaign, he was received by Mademoiselle Poisson, who was on the point of becoming Madame Lenormand d'Etiolles ; according to her, he was received as a wit ; his own version gave him quite another vocation in the house. It was there that he met Bernis, that big devil of an abbé, whom the profane dame had dubbed her feather-footed pigeon, on account of his large feet and manifold cooings.

When Bernis and Bernard met, as the cardinal expresses it, "at the door of that rebellious heart which was to rule the world," they had both already strongly-marked characters. Bernis was devoured with pride and ambition; Bernard, though he never became a cardinal, was, for all that, the wiser of the two: he knew that glory did not give her favors gratis; he contented himself with amours, with little songs, and little suppers, all in private. They both followed their own course, without digressions and without obstacles, the one with joyous carelessness, the other with blind ardor, both meeting now and then, on account of a rhyme or a woman, with Euterpe or with Madame de Pompadour. "Well, where are we, Monsieur Abbé?"—"Faith! I have arrived at the Academy." A little later.—"Here I am an ambassador." Soon after, "minister." Finally, "Alas! there is nothing more to be gained; they have made me cardinal. But how is it with you, Bernard!"—"Always Gentil-Bernard, as Voltaire says."—"And as the women say."—"Ah, you happy poet! Do you want to belong to the Academy?"—"Heaven defend me from it! it is more in your line, Monsieur Abbé."

Bernard was always true to his character. He was to the very last the French Anacreon, rousing at the sound of clinking glasses and songs, seeking the inspiring bubbles of champagne, but never the "bubble reputation." He made verses for the service of his love-affairs, but for no other purpose. He had a horror of printers and publishers; it was of no use to try; he would never consent to make up a little volume of his small poems. Could we find a poet of

so much sense in our own day? Still, it is more than ever time that we should understand that God has given poetry to the greater part of poets as the dew to the flower. Be, therefore, the poet of yourself, of your love, of your sorrow, and of your greatness; sing for your heart, but sing for yourself, and no one will complain of your song. Of what use is it to unveil to others the mysteries of your soul? A little modesty, if you please. Do not thus present to every comer your soul in undress; do not thus profane your purest love, that which conceals itself in the virgin forests of memory.

Fragments of Bernard's poem, *The Art of Love* appeared during his lifetime, but to his great sorrow. The publisher Leroux had slipped very frequently into the saloon which Bernard frequented, and from hearing him read and re-read it, had almost committed it to memory.

Bernard refused all favors which men are generally proud to obtain. He would not become a member of the Academy. He refused, like Rameau, titles of nobility.—“Let me see; what can I do for you, my dear poet?” said Madame de Pompadour, on her arrival at power. Bernard contented himself with kissing the hand of the marchioness.—“Go! you are a fool! you will never be good for anything!”—Madame de Pompadour got along better with the ambition of Bernis, who, through it, so well flattered her taste.—“Ah, he is not one to stop on the road; he is not like you, mourning for his Claudine. What fancy has taken you, to love that peasant-girl?”—“Love is the god of contrasts and extravagances, marchioness. When one begins with

a shepherd-girl, one finishes with a queen. I began with Claudine ; have I not got as far as—" —"The Bastile !" exclaimed Madame de Pompadour, with a smile of ill-omen. Bernard bit his lip, and departed with the lesson. He well knew that in love, playing with wit is playing with fire. He was already one of the most silent of lovers about his good fortune, drinking at leisure in his heart all the intoxication of life. But, from that day, his heart was an abyss of darkness to the world. He did not publish abroad a single mistress except his Claudine.

Bernard remained for ten years attached to the house of Coigny, where he was sometimes badly treated. The marshal on his death-bed regretted having abused the remarkable good humor and ever-amiable smile of the poet. He had never allowed him to eat at his table ; he had maltreated him time and again for his abstraction, his amours, his verses, and, above all, for his bad writing. He sent for him, gave him his proud hand, and said to his grandson : " I recommend M. Bernard to you, who is worthy of all your protection and of all your friendship. I have neglected him too much ; do not do the same."—The fortune of the poet was bettered somewhat by the will of M. de Coigny ; it improved still more from day to day. Bernard, all the while contending against the favors of fortune, died with an income of fifty thousand livres. It was a trifle alongside of his friend the cardinal, who in his best days had a revenue of half a million.

When Bernard was appointed secretary-general of the dragoons, about 1740, Voltaire, who exercised all the amenities of literature toward all poets and men of letters on a small scale, wrote to him as fol-

lows: "So the secretary of love is secretary of dragoons! Our destiny, my dear friend, is more agreeable than that of Ovid; so, too, your *Art of Love* seems to me better than his. You say that the fortune of M. de Coigny [the grandson of the marshal] has wings; see, then, how all the winged gods combine to favor you. But if his fortune has wings, yours has eyes; we will no longer call her blind, since she takes such good care of you. Remember me in the midst of your laurels and myrtles."—Bernard was already called the French Ovid, on account of his *Art of Love* and for some charming poems, such as the epistle to Claudine. At that time, people doted on everything; they doted on Bernard. All the women had learned this epistle to Claudine from the mouth of Bernard.—"Ah, poet," said Madame Forbin to him one day (if we may believe Bachaumont), "I know your epistle by heart; but what can I do to make your heart forget it?"—They were thus jealous of Claudine; but they were not jealous of Céliante, of Zélie, or of any other celebrated rival. This epistle to Claudine, which commences like a tale of La Fontaine's, turns by degrees into an elegy. The poet, after having listened to the most-gay and most profane recollections of love, ends by abandoning himself to the inspirations of his heart. As this epistle is the best page in the history of Bernard, I detach a few lines, not indiscriminately, from it:

Is she the less the child of morn
 For blooming in a barren field?
 My love's the meadow's fairest flower.
 There in my youth I saw Claudine,
 And, seeing her, all loves were seen.

Here the poet relates, in the taste of the time, how they intoxicated the good curate, in order to intoxicate themselves at their ease with the profane cup.

How many a kiss, how many a vow !
 'Twere vain to count them, well you know.
 The dawn sees fewer flowers expand.

At last the poet comes to bid Claudine adieu : the heart suffocated with pleasure, revives a little under a pure ray of love :—

I leave thee to thine idle hours,
 When from thy lonely cot thou'lt see
 The woods and streams, the lawns and flowers,
 That heard my youthful vows to thee.
 Claudine, wilt thou be true to me ?

These last verses show the same tender and poetic sentiment which inspired André Chénier. We find in them the first trace of that lachrymose vein which we have too much cultivated since. Out of these four verses, we should at the present day make eighty. We should, perhaps, gain some rays of the setting sun, a bit of sky, a melancholy star. Bernard is too firmly rooted to the earth to think of that : he seeks heaven only in his mistress's eyes.

The first verses of the *Art of Love* also trace in vague outline the life of Gentil-Bernard. It is well understood, that to comprehend the history of a poet we must read and re-read his verses rather than his biography, which only relates to the externals of his life. In his verses, the poet here and there lets out the truth ; he unconsciously reveals himself ; he scatters without thinking, all the treasures of memory,

like the painter who is surprised to find that he has given the eyes or the mouth of his mistress to St. Cecilia or Joan of Arc. See these first verses of the *Art of Love* :

Coigny, I've seen, and victory, and war ;
But things like these transcend my power far.
I've seen the court, I've passed my spring away,
Mute at the feet of idols of the day.
Bacchus I've seen, nor made his joys my song ;
Nor to Apollo owned submission long.
Daphne I've seen ; my song shall be of love !

To comprehend how Gentil-Bernard understood love, it is necessary to read his entire poem. This *Art of Love* is rather the *Art not to Love*, or, still more, the *Art to Love no more*. Olympia and Cythera, Venus and her nymphs, the whole mythological machinery is there, in action, for the last time. Unfortunately for love, the most apparent symbol of the poem is the girdle of Venus. Gentil-Bernard, who is scarcely a Christian, sees love nowhere else. But of what use is the *Art of Love*, as if there was a school of love ? Love is a pure dew which descends from heaven upon our hearts, when it pleases God ; love is, therefore, a surprise, a divination, an extempore science. A woman tells more about it with a look or a smile than all the Ovids and Gentil-Bernards in the world.

Madame de Pompadour, who, in spite of herself, felt a secret liking for Bernard, succeeded in exiling him a little way from Paris. She appointed him librarian of the chateau de Choisy, where she had a charming little house built for him, which was called by the poets of the time the Parnassus of the French Anacreon. Bernard, who was never alone in his

exile, resigned himself to it with very good grace. Louis XV. rarely entered this library, or Bernard either.—“What should I do among all those dead men?” he said gayly to his friends. One day he wrote to Voltaire: “Send, therefore, to the poor grave-digger of Choisy your beautiful poem with the illustrations. I keep a grave always open; but these dead people will return again like spirits.”

Louis XV. fancied Bernard by fits and starts; he always received him with a good grace, and had no objection to hearing his verses; but Bernard did not like Louis XV. so near by. If we may believe a letter of Bertin, the king condescended to be jealous of the poet—in respect to love, be it understood. Madame de Pompadour went sometimes to forget, at the side of Bernard, the king, the Jesuits, and the Parliament. In his *Journey to Burgandy*, Bertin, in passing the Chateau de Choisy, poetically recalls the pleasant pastime of Gentil-Bernard:—

’Twas there, surrounded by the loves,
Whose minister he was so long;
He turned old Ovid’s art to song,
At eve he donned his ivy crown;
And all the labors of the day
His pupil, when her task was done,
With one sweet kiss would well repay.

The pupil was sometimes Madame de Pompadour; but when she was absent, Gentil-Bernard had no time to complain. And besides, as his wines were worthy of his wit, he had his friends continually chatting about him. At Choisy, as at Paris, the librarian breakfasted, dined, and supped heartily every day, which is marvellous for a poet.

When Bacchus and Cupid (pardon me for returning to these old idols; but by dint of brushing off the dust which covers them, I am caught by them in spite of myself) — when Bacchus and Cupid gave Gentil-Bernard time to breathe, he recalled the startled muses. To this we owe those Anacreontic odes, gallant epistles, and licentious fantasies, which the cunning poet cared not to have printed, knowing well that they would be all imprinted on the heart, under the cover of the screen.

All these poems, by good right styled fugitive, are far from being original with Gentil-Bernard, who was little more than an agreeable copyist of the songs of his predecessors. Innumerable poets had, before him passed into the same pretty garden, to gather there these unhallowed roses. Without speaking of those older and better known, Bernard has some resemblance to Sannazar, the king of the sonnet and the *canzone*, the charming sacred and profane poet; to Pontanus, the poet of the graces; Francini, who sang so little but who sang so well; Strozzi, the sweet elegist; Buchanan, the vagabond, who died weary of life, although he had loved; in fine, to some of the pleasing French poets of the sixteenth century.

In the volume of his works, Gentil-Bernard narrates almost all the fickle changes of his heart. Sometimes he sings his hamlet:—

Naught can outshine
This cot of mine.
Landscape so bright
Would give delight
E'en to Watteau!

Sometimes he laments being at court. He is almost the only poet of his time who has not sung the laurels or the virtues of the king. He sang Love, who is the king of kings. Louis XV. therefore, found him more witty than all the others. Most generally Bernard warbled over the good graces of Olympia, the absence of Themyra, the kisses of Galatea, the Trianon of Cythera, Pleasure, the roses of Aurora and Eglea. Once only did the tears of the divine sentiment in his heart prevail over all these wanton passions; he had seen Bathilda, that is to say, Madame de Longpré, who had taken refuge in a convent, to lament for a faithless lover:—

A pure and holy flame I feel,
That makes me worthy of the shrine
Where I have boldly dared to kneel.
A worldly fire consumed my heart,
My bark was on a dangerous sea,
My very tastes were scarcely free
Inveigled by the siren's art,
To-day a change has o'er me come;
My bark has touched on other ground,
Which, led by voice of doves, I've found.

The whole of this epistle is charming. Love descends too quickly from the celestial regions, which, however, he usually does when he follows Bernard. At the commencement, one thinks that he is rising to the ecstasies of the archangels; “but,” exclaims the poet, “we shall always have time to sigh up there.”—Images full of grace and boldness are found in this epistle, which appear as if they had been taken from the Song of Songs.

Within the captive roses' bower,
The one which gave my heart its wound,

Amid a thorny bush is found,
Which guards the sad complaining flower.

Bernard at a riper age was struck with the beautiful poetry of the Bible. He translated Solomon for the amusement of Madame de Pompadour. In this undertaking he was happier than Voltaire; he had the art of reproducing, with all their oriental grace, the charming images of the song and of voluptuous pleasure. The burning wind which swept over the harp of Solomon has touched even the lyre of Gentil-Bernard. Of this entire book of oriental poems, but two dialogues have come down to us, *Éma* and *Amintha*. Gentil-Bernard valued this book highly if he ever valued anything; but the poor poet had a devout niece for his heir, who burnt everything as a sacrifice, except the will.

Gentil-Bernard was extinguished, with his glory, some years before his death. He awoke, a madman, in July, 1770, but he had the happiness not to be conscious of it. He lived for some years in this condition, under the care of his niece. The cause of this almost-rational madness, so calm and gentle was it, had made some noise in the world. The Chevalier du Châtellux has remarked, that if all the men attributed it to the passion of the poet for Olympias and Corinnas, the women, on the other hand, ascribed it solely to his devotion to good wine.—“This remark is not to be despised,” says Grimm. Must we pity Gentil-Bernard? What mattered, after all, this delirium? This half-sleep of the intelligence is the preface to death. Gleams of intellect returned to him at long intervals. Thus, one evening that he was present at a representation of his opera; he asked his neighbor the name

of the piece and of the actress.—“*Castor et Pollux*,” and “*Mademoiselle Arnould*.”—“Ah!” he exclaimed, “my glory and my love.”—One night, when he was calling Claudine, his niece told him he was dreaming.—“Ah, yes,” said he, “for I have seen happiness.”

He died without fear and without reproach—Happy poet.—without care about glory and without care about death.

Have we not treated with too much contempt the love-poets of the eighteenth century? Those literary free-thinkers who admire the vigorous and flowing, laugh at all this troop of pretty poets, who caved in the luxuriant paths of Paphos and Cythera, humbly reclining at the foot of Parnassus, whilst they took good care not to scale. Now, at the present time, with the exception of three or four poets, who have some heart and soul, what have all these diseased Chattertons done for us? Gentil-Bernard, song of Paphos, Cyprus, Madame de Pompadour, Oriz, the Graces, Anacreon, the locks of Daphne, the hands of Themyra, the lips of Claudine. All this has passed away as quickly as bouquets plucked under the sun’s rays; but tell me what do our lugubrious geniuses sing to their fair ones? Is it love, beauty, grace, youth? They sing, that is to say, they bewail over, the bitterness of life; they weep for their vanished illusions: they groan over the rough road of life; in fine, instead of singing of love, it may be said that they sing of death. Not a flash of gayety in these stormy hearts; not a ray of joy in these dark souls! You might, here and there, see a tolerably-pretty blue eye, if a tear did not rise to moisten it, but this tear which veils the blue eye is poetry.

In this slight *pastel*, I have drawn Gentil-Bernard, or something like him, armed and equipped. I have neglected many details, a madrigal here, a good saying there. I ought, perhaps, to have told you that his inspiration was rebellions, and that he would much rather have caught a rose or a kiss than a rhyme; that, in spite of his herculean frame, he dressed in a finical style, loving trinkets above everything. Finally, I have shown you the poet; if you love him, you will go farther; his works are exposed to the insults of the Quais. There is still in existence, as if by miracle, a pretty little London edition, clothed in morocco; do not fail to get a copy, for that one, which is very choice, doubtless has passed through the delicate hands of some pretty marchioness of 1780. Do not forget to buy this little book, which is one of the last memorials of the gallantries of France; give a little space in your library—your cemetery, as Gentil-Bernard said—to this precious volume, which still preserves the fragrant dust of the boudoirs. On opening this graceful volume, you will inhale an antiquated odor of this poor eighteenth century, which ended so badly; you will see again on the frontispiece all the pretty Cupids of Cythera, sharpening their arrows and their glances; you will touch with respect the little blue ribbon marking the most amorous page; in fine, you will see hovering around you the shadow of that sweet smile, which for fifty years hung on all the pretty months; that enchanting smile which fled for ever with the soul of Queen Marie-Antoinette.

FLORIAN.

Is it not a strange sight, that of a captain of dragoons, singing tenderly and chastely the loves of shepherdesses in the midst of the society of philosophers without faith, poets without a muse, abbés without a God, on the eve of 1793? The idyl flourishes amid ruins — what would it be good for elsewhere? When Nature sings, the poet listens; when all is

NOTE. There are here and there agreeable poets to be found, whom criticism, either through contempt or forgetfulness, has allowed to slumber too long by the side of the literary highway. It is a chance if some sympathetic souls have raised a modest tombstone to these poor forsaken, to declare in few words their virtues and their works. It has often happened that they have found readers if not critics. Thus Florian, banished with some injustice from the field of letters, has found innumerable places of refuge. He has been translated into all languages. There is not a village in France which does not contain some fragments of his works. His books are understood by everybody, like all books which speak to the heart. Last year on the seashore at Normandy, while a beating rain compelled me to remain in the small tavern of a fisherman, I discovered on the chimney-piece, *Numa Pompilius*, which served to divert my attention a little from the bad weather. I was indolently abandoning myself to the charm of the nymph Egeria, when an old sailor who was smoking and drinking on the opposite side of the fire, began to talk to me about the book in a thundering voice. He had read it with enthusiasm in the most tender years of his youth; now that old age had come he put his spectacles astride his nose to read it still.

silent, the shepherd resumes his hautboy or his song. Virgil did not sing until the Italian land was bedewed with blood and tears. Did Florian wish to oppose the impurity and irreligion of his age by celebrating the palmy days of innocence? Did he hope to bring a blush to the cheeks of these dissolute nobles, and these sinning marchionesses, by the artless picture of the loves of the golden age? No. Florian sung as a poet, without knowing in what country and for what people; he invoked the recollections of his youth, and the shades of his dearly-loved books; he sought in his heart the fountains of tenderness, and in his imagination idyls full blown. He sang far from the world like a solitary shepherd. The principal charm of his romances is that they transport us far from the world: almost from the commencement we travel on the wings of the wind toward unknown lands. Soon in the midst of a vast solitude, where we leave here and there all our recollections, we hear the sound of a pipe or a bagpipe, we inhale the distant fragrance of the flowering meadows. Soon the wind upon which we are borne drives away the morning mist. We discover a beautiful valley, clothed with fresh verdure, where pretty white sheep, decorated with rose-colored ribbons, are scattered about. We must admit that the spell is so strong, that we lose all knowledge of the past. The past flies us like a confused image: we even go so far as to imagine that formerly, in a better time, we lived among these shepherds, these shepherdesses, and these sheep. And we are as happy as children. The most perverted among us are delighted with this enchanted existence, which passes so softly in this solitary val-

ley, shaded by rustling elms. Souls, the deepest sunk in evil, at the sight of these innocent pleasures, again find within themselves the spring of their youth, long since dried up. There is not an abandoned girl who does not feel she is somewhat of a shepherdess, and shed a sweet tear, forgotten in the bottom of her heart, a sweet tear of the repentant Magdalen, at the sight of Estelle and Galatea, so beautiful from their purity, so happy from their innocence.

Thanks to his god-mother, Florian was named Jean-Pierre—just the name for a shepherd; thanks to his father, he was named Claris de Florian—just the name for a bucolic poet. He came into the world in a pretty chateau of Basses-Cévennes, built by his grandfather's vanity in spite of the patrimonial fortune. He came into the world in 1755, in the spring, as you may well suppose. The spring which he has sung so often, was ever his best season. He gathered his first roses and his first laurels in the spring. Death, however, came to seize him in the autumn—but death was mistaken that time, or rather death came appropriately in the autumn. To die in the autumn, when the swallows depart in search of better countries, when the flowers give out their last fragrance, when the yellow leaves strew the deserted path—is not that the last dream of the makers of eulogues?

The Florians had been distinguished in various ways, but especially in arms. This very family counted among its ranks several brave captains, a learned bishop, and innumerable canons. The father of our story-teller reposed from the fatigues

of his ancestors. He had married by chance, as it always happens, a pretty Castilian, Gilletta de Salgues; and for him and for her the days passed away in the indolence of country life. The grandfather of Florian, not having a chateau in his head like the poet's, the warriors, and the canons, took the notion to build one on his ground, and in this work had expended his last crown, consoling himself with the idea that his brothers the canons would do him the favor to die and bequeath him their property—but in those times canons were in no hurry to die. Besides the great uncles of Florian, wishing to appease, by a pious work, the Heaven which they had so many times offended, in dying constituted God and his saints their sole legatees.

Florian's education was neglected. A little Latin, less Greek, some scraps of theology, and you have it all. Without Voltaire, who became his master at eleven, Nature would have done the rest. Florian was well prepared to become *a man of Nature*, as he was afterward called, like Jean Jacques. He passed through infancy in the midst of rural occupations. The first sight which charmed him was a sunset. The theatre was a beautiful valley of Languedoc, bordered by the Cevennes. Innumerable scenes animated this theatre. Now it was the herdsman driving his cows to the meadow—now the shepherd leading his sheep to water—the shepherdess going to the fields with her sickle, or gleaning after the harvest; and then the dances under the elm, and the hunters coursing over the fields, and the sports of the shepherdesses. He was an assiduous observer of all the changes of Nature—he

followed the seasons in all their caprices. At ten he sauntered alone like a monk of La Trappe, reading with passionate delight the first chapters of *Telemachus*, adoring Calypso and all the Nymphs together, without speaking of the chambermaid of the chateau, whom, said Voltaire, it was necessary to turn out of doors on account of him, and in spite of him — dreaming of a distant isle, to people it with all the blond fairies of his young imagination. Never did scholar play truant better. There was a little spring about half a league from the chateau, which flowed from the foot of the mountain over a bed of pebbles, shaded by some old cherry-trees, where he went more than a thousand times to forget his Greek and Latin lessons in its murmur. As you see, the idle revery which makes good and bad poets, seized Florian in the very morning of life. In a letter to Ducis, he relates that in the happy days of the past, he was not so much absorbed by the ecstasies of contemplation as not to perceive, during a certain month of June, that the cherry-trees bore cherries; he avows even, with his accustomed candor, that he gathered without remorse all that he could get at. St. Augustine did not do otherwise at twelve. You will remember the pears stolen by the future bishop of Hippona.—Florian did not confine himself in the study of Nature and her fruits to the spring by the cherry-trees. He poetically followed the course of the brook — he mysteriously lost himself in the labyrinth of the grove. If he met a gleaner moved by sympathy, he gleaned with her. If he met a herdsman, he pulled the ribbons out of his shoes to tie round the neck of the prettiest and whitest of the

lambs. People have their reasons for becoming pastoral poets. Thus in this tender age, when the *mirror of the soul* ardently preserves all impressions, even the most confused, Florian stored away in his imagination these scenes of Nature which he described at a later period, by dipping into the book of memory. The pretty white sheep you have seen in Estelle; in an eclogue he has called the gleaner Ruth.

In relating to you this bucolic infancy of Florian, I have no intention of making a pastoral romance. I pass over even a good dozen of idyls, I give you only the heads of the chapters. I forget the moonlights, the rosy-fingered auroras, the magnificent evening storms. Besides, I have not spoken to you of the chivalric instincts of this child who was connected with Spain by his mother. Gilletta sang to her dear Jean-Pierre the legends of her land: the Ines of Camoens, Ximena the faithful. Even while listening to his mother, Jean-Pierre lisped the Spanish tongue, and dreamed of becoming a superb chevalier, armed for the defence of his country, and the honor of his lady. Without thinking of it, Gilletta begins this grotesque epic which is called *Gonsalvo de Cordova*. Gilletta died; but Florian fumbled over the Spanish poets as if in search of his mother's shade.

Voltaire had married one of his nieces to one of Florian's uncles. Thanks to this uncle, who foresaw the approaching poverty of the Castellan, Jean-Pierre was received by Voltaire as a scholar. He was eleven years old when he entered the court of Ferney, or rather the *Thebaid* of the patriarch, as

the philosophers called it. Voltaire was playing chess with Father Adam. He was expending his forces on little verses, little letters, and little stories, as a struggle against oblivion. Father Adam condemned young Florian to the composition of themes, and as the latter was often puzzled to put in Latin, what he did not understand very well in French, he went slyly to Voltaire to beg him to *construe his sentence*. Voltaire construed the sentence so good-naturedly that he went back *thinking that he had made it himself*. Voltaire was amused with Jean-Pierre's candor—he played truant with his scholar. He awakened in him gayety and wit. He somewhat changed the *man of Nature*. From the date of his sojourn at Ferney, Florian dreamed somewhat less, he sported somewhat more: he even followed so well the lessons of his master, that he imitated even the satirical smile of the old philosopher. “That is right,” said Voltaire, “assume the appearance of having wit, and wit will come. At Ferney the Iliad gained the day over Telemachus: we no longer have adored nymphs but superb heroes; the ardor of combat triumphs over chaste affections—Hector and Achilles filled Florian's head, as the nymphs had filled his heart. He undertook to renew their exploits in Voltaire's garden. There was in this garden an immense bed of poppies with variegated heads. Every time that he passed by them, he gave a side glance at them, muttering in a low tone, “There are the faithless Trojans: they shall perish under my blows!” He gave to every poppy the name of a son of Priam, and the most beautiful of all he called Hector. The great day arrived. He entered brave-

ly on the field of battle, armed with a wooden sabre. He cut off the heads right and left of a thousand poppies. In vain did Xanthus in his fury strive to oppose his passage. He braved the waters of Xanthus. Already Deiphobus was no more, Sarpedon closed his eyes, Asteropis fell beneath his blows; the field of battle was strewn with the dying and the dead. But that was not enough: Hector remained, the murderer of Patroclus still raised his haughty head. He sprang toward him. Tender Andromache, tremble! Hector must perish. But just then Voltaire arrived. He had been watching the young hero half an hour. He saw him with indignation cutting the heads off of his fine poppies: he arrested him in his exploits. Florian, quite surprised, told him that he was rehearsing the *Iliad*. Voltaire laughed heartily, and left him in peace to continue the war of the Greeks and the Trojans.

At Ferney, Florian saw how books are made, his chivalric instincts were effaced. The sword of which he dreamed was transformed into a pen—the field of battle into a sheet of paper. However, before being a poet, Florian became a captain of dragoons. Voltaire thought that there quite enough rhymsters in France; he dissuaded Florian from poetry, and sent him to the Duke de Penthièvre, with a petition to him to make something out of his scholar. The duke made him a page. Behold Jean-Pierre in the midst of all the fêtes and splendors of the world, if not of genius. Instead of the chateau of Ferney, which in truth had somewhat of an incomprehensible air, we have the magnificent chateau of Secaux, or the poetic one of Anet. Florian, at a later day, evoked

its historical associations; and in rather bad verse, recalled the fact that Henry II. had built this chateau for Diana of Poitiers.

From being a page of the Duke de Penthièvre, Florian went to the school of Bapaume, where he wasted his time in intrigues. At seventeen, not knowing exactly what to do with himself, he returned to Ferney. At last, thanks to Voltaire, the Duke de Penthièvre gave him a captain's commission in his regiment of dragoons. As the war was finished, the young officers fought a great deal among themselves to expend their ardor, which did not prevent them from being the best friends in the world. Florian fought marvellously. He carried his sword as the shepherds their crooks, with quite as much grace. Notwithstanding his bucolic instincts, he shed the blood of his equals with sufficient coolness on account of any sort of face that came along. While in garrison at Maubeuge, he fell desperately in love with a beautiful canoness, who was *sensible of his martyrdom*, as he himself expresses it. He wished to marry her by beat of drum, like a true captain of dragoons. Marriage then seemed to him the principal charm of love; but his family restrained him in time from this impulse which came from his heart.

From the date of this affair, which always survived in his mind, he detached himself by degrees from his foolish and boisterous intimacies. He sought solitude to listen to the beatings of his heart, and the first indications of poetry. In his discourse, before the French Academy, he thus recalls this happy time. "When I was a soldier, what a delight it was

to me after a noisy drill, to silently withdraw to the shade of the elm-trees to re-read the *Georgics* ! Until then he had not written a line. One day he heard that the academy had given as a subject for the poetical prize, the abolition of servitude in the king's domains. " I took," says Florian, " my sensibility for inspiration, my heart stood me in place of talents, and my piece gained the prize." This little poem was entitled, *Voltaire and the Serf of Mount Jura*. The glorious laureate abandoned his regiment, and came to Paris to seek other successes. *Galatea* and *Estelle* were already ripe in his imagination ; but before gathering them, he gave himself up to the attractions of the theatre. Encouraged by M. d'Argental, he made some harlequinades for the Comédie-Italienne. Soon, however, his love for the canoness re-echoed in his heart, he yearned for the vales of his native land. He recalled the pastoral of Cervantes, he re-read Gessner, he wrote *Galatea*. About the same time, thanks to *Telemachus*, and above all to the *Incas*, he commenced his poetic romance, *Numa Pompilius*.

After his romances and his comedies, he had nothing more to do, unless to give alms. M. de Penthièvre, who was the most compassionate of the dukes of those days, made over the rents of his best estate to Florian to dispense to the poor. It was certainly the first time that a nobleman had taken a gentleman into his service to dispense alms. Florian discharged his office admirably. He scattered benefits with the solicitude of a father for his children. He left among the poor many a recollection of his passage here below.

After Voltaire, Gessner, the Duke de Penthièvre, M. d'Argental, he had for friends agreeable poets, who for the most part thought, or pretended to think, themselves great poets. They were Arnault, Delille, Ducis, Marmontel, Fontanes. Florian partook of their faith. In his pretty fable, the *Shepherd and the Nightingale*, he exclaims, speaking of Delille :

Worthy rival, and surpassing
Of Ausonia's famous bard.

If he has not elevated Delille above Homer, it is on account of the rhyme.

In his letters, as in his minor poems, we always find an admiring friendship, which is not common among poets, and at the same time a primitive modesty. He writes to Gessner: "I should so like to pass for your scholar, but I am far from that good position: and my poor *Galatea*, rich as she is on the banks of the Tagus, is not worthy to possess a little flock on the mountains of Switzerland."

Despite his friends and his liking for short journeys, Florian often sought solitude. The Duke de Penthièvre had abandoned to him the summer-house of the chateau at Seeaux: he passed his best days there in study and contemplation. He made his poetical promenades in the paths of Aulnay, with his sportive troop of shepherds and shepherdesses, listening with his whole soul to the distant bagpipes of his native land.

At Paris he was among noisy friends, lively mistresses, little suppers; but at the chateau of Penthièvre, Florian again became a great simple-minded child, lost in the innocent joys of Nature.

I have not spoken of the unknown friends of Florian. The pastoral poet was adored in secret by a multitude of marchionesses who reposed their over-fatigued hearts in his tender eclogues. These poor marchionesses of the reign of Louis XV. had almost all skipped over their youth. They had spoiled their springtime by rouge, patches, powder, and hoop petticoats, in reading *Galatea and Estelle* they found again, as if by enchantment, that youth with rosy cheeks which they had a glimpse of, as one has a glimpse in a mirror of a graceful and distant form, half hidden by the whirl of the waltz. In reading Florian all these poor neglected women, already turning pale at the approaches of the Revolution, felt themselves young for the first time, their cheeks were withered, but the soul, long buried under an exterior, seared by profane loves, bloomed like the violet beneath the snow; the mouth was dead, but the heart lived. They had commenced with Crebillon the Gay, they would fain end with Florian.

An old marquis—the last marquis—having still, in spite of the reign of terror and his eighty years, that mild and intelligent smile which died with the eighteenth century, has given me the full benefit of his recollections for this portrait. He often saw Florian in 1788; and if he is to be believed, Florian was not the pale and fair complexion poet, with a melting, pure smile and hesitating speech, such as we see him through his works. He was of dark complexion; he was gay; his conversation had much playfulness and satire: he had wit or an epigram always at hand, but scarcely ever a gallant speech: however, the Princess de Lamballe was ac-

customed to say : “ I like better to hear him than to read him. His face was cut on the model of Parny’s; it was rather less animated, but quite as striking. Florian had purity and simplicity only in the solitude of the fields — as soon as he entered the world he became almost a Don Juan. Two natures incessantly struggled within him, the child of the mountains and the captain of dragoons, the pastoral poet and the *hero* of the Comédie Italienne; and it is under these different aspects that we must study him.

M. de Thiard said, and plenty of others after him, that in all the shepherd scenes of Florian, a wolf was wanting. In fact we are put out with Nemorino, for making no attempts upon the innocence of Estelle. This innocence gets off too easily. We should not be sorry to see this spotless lamb in the grasp of the wolf, though the wolf should eat her. But Florian was not so much of a shepherd as has been imagined; as regards gallantry he was really almost a captain of dragoons. The little abbés and the poets of the time had not left him so much behind. Have you an idea who were the models of his shepherd-esse? Neither more nor less than the actresses of the Comédie-Italienne. Mademoiselle Camille, whom he has sung more than once, has sat for Estelle. It is this same Mademoiselle Camille whose portrait he has thus drawn :—

Who is Camilla, do you ask?

A creature lively, gay, and loving;

A fairy beneath Cupid’s mask,

’Twixt town and court for ever roving,

Turning all heads but her own,

Light she trips through life alone.

Laughing still at each new lover,
 Gay and free her way she wends ;
 Grace and wit around her hover,
 She comes — each knee in homage bends.
 A little bag is all she carries,
 Slips in each heart, no longer tarries,
 But forward where her journey tends.

In reference to his works as to his life, it is especially necessary to bring forward those things which are neglected. We will pass rapidly over *Numa*, (*Gonzalez*), *William Tell*, all of which belong to an immature literature, which we must condemn, without pity for some pretty pictures and some graceful passages. These songs are solemn puerilities : they are historical pieces in pastel. The heroes of these strange epics are at the most only fit to tend sheep, and are afraid of wolves at that. In Switzerland, at Rome, in Spain, Florian saw nothing, but an eclogue. Once only, doubtless as a change, he has seen fit to put the heroic trumpet to his lips instead of the rustic pipe. His *Summary of the Establishment of the Moors*, is one of the best chapters of the history of Spain. We will pass rapidly over *Galatea* and *Estelle*, so much despised, but so much like a fairy tale—an enchanted world, a refreshing oasis. We will pass rapidly over the twelve *Novels*. These little romances, intended by the author to recall to us the private history of all countries, at least remind us that we have a heart. Florian told stories marvellously well, as Marmontel says, in speaking of him, Nature said to him, Tell stories. One of his little romances, *Clandine*, is a masterpiece of Nature and sentiment. Have you ever read anything

so simple and touching as this so well-known song which Claudine sings?—

Poor little Jean,	Wearied I sigh,
Who once sang so gay!	My love's far away;
Sad and alone,	Nothing have I
Why hast naught to say?	To others to say.

Do you know anything more simple and tender than this ballad of Robin Gray, a stanza of which I remember?—

My father argued sair; My mother didna speak;
 But she lookit in my face till my heart was like to break:
 Sae they gied him my hand, though my heart was in the sea;
 And auld Robin Gray was gudeman to me.

Among the things which are neglected in the books of Florian, are to be found his poems in verse, his fugitive poetry, his translation of Don Quixote, and of the episode of Ines de Castro, the eulogy on Louis XII., his tales in verse, and an Anacreontic tale. Although the Academy bestowed the prize upon his poems, they are the attempts of a tyro which do not promise much—no imagination, no enthusiasm, no grandeur; occasionally agreeable verses, but oftener poor hemistiches which go hobbling along, picking up along the road bad enough rhymes. His fugitive poems are of a piece with the others; however we must recognise the charming grace and pleasing unconstraint of the minor poets of the time. His translation of Don Quixote is only a pretty piece of puerility; Cervantes would have been sorry enough to have seen his hero in such French costume. The translation in verse of the episode of Ines de Castro

is more happy. We do not find in Florian the grandeur and splendor of the Portuguese poet, but almost always the sentiment which inspired him. Thus the strophe which commences *Assi como* is rendered with a true, Florianesque grace, *as the flower too early reaped*. The eulogy on Louis XII. was worthy of a prize from the Academy; that is to say, worthy of the poems in verse. The stories in verse are light and graceful satires, which harm no one. The Anacreontic story is charming: it is called *the Muses*. Thalia is walking at the foot of Parnassus in search of a lover. Instead of a lover she meets a fair, half-naked child, who is running after butterflies, and taking a cruel pleasure in piercing them with pins. Thalia asks why he is so mischievous. The child replies that tired of doing nothing he does evil. The beauty and spirit of the child charm the Muse, who begs him to go with her. He picks up a little bag, throws it over his shoulder, and gives Thalia his hand. What have you got in your bag, my child? Nothing but my playthings. He commences an enchanting song which has neither air nor words. Arrived at Parnassus, Thalia, jealous of her sisters, resolves to conceal the child from them. She imprisons him in an orchard enclosed by hedges. There she passes all her days in teaching him to read: we are not told what book. Soon, however, the poor Muse sighs uneasily as she regards her scholar. The child profits marvellously by this first success. "Mamma," he says to her, "you carry in your hand a charming mask, which is always laughing, give it to me or I shall die of grief."—"But," says Thalia, "it is the attribute of my divin-

ity." — "So much the worse!" answers the traitor. The poor Muse gives the mask, and the rogue conceals it in his bag. This is not all. Thalia has only taught him comedy; he wants to know everything—music, dancing, philosophy, and even astronomy, it all turns to some account. "Open the orchard for me," says the traitor, "that I may go and learn from all your sisters; once learned I will return to remain with you for ever." Thalia gives him his liberty, and he goes to trouble the heads of all the other Muses—even Melpomene can not escape. She too loves the joyous child. Now comes jealousy which puts all Parnassus in disorder. The arts are despised, the dances and concerts interrupted. Meantime Minerva visits the Nine Sisters—she finds a profound silence. The Muses, scattered, pensive, solitary, blushing, hide themselves. At last they re-assemble to sing the praises of their protectress; but their voices are in discord. They have forgotten their songs. Not one of them has her attributes, the child has taken all, and turned them into playthings. All of a sudden this fatal child spreads his white wings, from which all his stolen goods are suspended. He takes his flight with a laugh. "Adieu!" says he to the Muses; "don't forget me: my name is Love, and it always costs something to make my acquaintance.

On succeeding to his patrimonial inheritance, Florian had received nothing but debts. It was partly on this account that he tried the theatre, and the theatre made his fortune. Throughout his comedies and harlequinades, he remained faithful to his style. He made the eclogue flourish even on the

boards of the Comédie-Italienne. How do you suppose he metamorphosed Harlequin into a good, sensible fellow? In reference to this, some one said: "You are Harlequin, my master, and you weep!" This Harlequin of Florian's, however, weeps with as good a grace as the other Harlequins laugh. In his drama, Florian belongs to the school of Marivaux. He lavishes at once all the little sensibilities of his soul, and all the little graces of his mind. It must be confessed that this mind is not that of a master; but on the other hand the scholar has a certain charm of original simplicity. In other respects there should be no misapprehension: the drama of Florian should with justice, and in spite of La Harpe, be condemned to oblivion; it has long since only been a drama for children. Florian, who rehearsed all his comedies at M. d'Argental's house, played the part of Harlequin with much gayety and feeling. The worthy Carlin did not play better if we may believe the gazettes at the times.

The most ardent and most delightful dream of the poet of *Estelle*, was an armchair at the Academy. Oh, my poor poet, so enamored of solitude, of verdant mountains, of shaded valleys, of babbling springs, what do you want in this Academy so dismal and noisy? Why seat yourself in the shadow of the pedant called La Harpe? You, who sang so well in the shadow of the elm-trees? Florian had the Academy fever more severely than any one else; for ten years he sighed only for the Academy. At last the Academy took pity on him—pity, that is almost the word. He succeeded the Cardinal de Laines. His reception was most brilliant, thanks

especially to the presence of the Duke de Penthièvre, the Duchess of Orleans, and the Princess de Lamballe. His discourse was again an eclogue. Florian relates therein how he became a poet. "The song of the birds, the murmur of the waves, the tranquil calm of the woods, all spoke to me of poetry. The tree arrested me beneath its shade, the solitary fountain which I had hitherto sought to quench my thirst, I now sought for my pleasure; the deserts even, the rugged mountains, the uncultivated and wild haunts, had charms for me: all was embellish'd to my eyes. I at last felt Nature." On this day the happy academician first made known his fables. He was applauded; he was declared by the Academy to be the successor of La Fontaine. The Academy had not much to say on that day. No one has succeeded to that magnificent heritage; Florian himself is but a faint copyist. He has created nothing, he has translated German and especially Spanish apologues. Thus the ingenious fabulist yelp of Priarte loses all his charm in Florian's verse; we can hardly understand the point of his fable. However, in default of creative genius, it must be admitted that Florian's fables possess nature and simplicity. It is not, as in La Fontaine, the peculiar attraction of the story, the ingenious disposition of the characters, the perfect dialogue, in fine, that comedy in a hundred different acts, which is nothing less than the comedy of life; but beneath all this there is something more. Florian has found scenes worthy of comedy. La Fontaine always gives us the scenes of life, Florian sometimes that of the heart.

The style of Florian has a charm from its sweetness and clearness. It has the tender freshness, the passing brilliancy, the clear blue color of the periwinkle; but like the periwinkle it wants strength. It is the easy style of a second-rate author. We must not confound this facility with the appearance of facility which conceals the labor of the great masters.

The life of Florian was an idyl almost to the end, in spite of the dragons and the actresses; but the Revolution came to spoil this idyl in its most beautiful stanza. How could it well be finished in face of the Terrorists, in face of Marat, that surgeon, who with the guillotine for a scalpel, stalked throughout France; in face of those terrible journalists who wrote so many epitaphs; in face of that maddened people who gave a loose rein to all the passions, good and bad, great and little.

Banished, like many others on account of his name, Florian took refuge at Sceaux in 1793, and there in solitude he sang still, as well as he could, the shepherdesses and the fields; but the sans-culottes of the neighborhood, auguring ill of him from his alms-giving and dreamy air, informed the Committee of Public Safety, that the former chevalier De Florian had concealed treasure, and was affected with the aristocratic fever. Thereupon the poor pastoral poet was conducted to La Bourbe. In this hideous prison, which gave up its inmates only to the guillotine, Florian, although quivering with terror, found as ever shepherdesses and elm-trees. He still sounded the rural pipe. Like Roucher, like Chénier, he sang to the end. He, however, escaped the scaffold,

but not death. Death had marked him on the threshold of La Bourbe, and counted upon him. It was in vain they told him on the fall of Robespierre, "Thou art saved." It was in vain they received him on his return to Secaux, with a fête got up out of his romances, the prison had more than half killed him. He ended by dying side by side with a poor poem, *William Tell*, which he had finished in prison.

Does not the poet of the elm himself offer us the figure which best paints his poetic destiny? Is he not a flexible elm, nourishing its branches in the wind, the sun, and the dew? At first Nature cradles it in her bosom, it stretches out its arms toward Heaven, the Heaven which bestows life upon it, in the sun, wind, and rain. It grows, it expands; it timidly puts forth its green shoots while murmuring the sweetest songs. A tempest comes which overthrows it. The tempest past, it scarce tries to raise its head, the sun's force fails, and it dies half verdant and half withered. You will pardon me the simile: as you know, Florian commenced by cradling his growing genius on the bosom of Nature. He stretched out his arms toward poetry, which is the heaven of the poets. The poetry of Spain shed her abundant dews upon him, the tree put forth its swaying branches, the branches expanded beneath the influence of Fénelon and Voltaire; soon all the winds, good and bad, make the tree incline by turns and murmur, now tender romances, now languishing idyls. Thus Florian admired a pastoral of Cervantes, and, full of ardor, sets to work to translate it. He re-reads *Telemachus*, and writes *Numa*. Inspired by Gess-

ner and Montemayor, he writes *Estelle*. He is enthusiastic about the *Incas*; and after the *Incas* comes *Gonsalvo*. Need we say that his poems and tales in verse are the children of Voltaire? But we must likewise admit, that among all these foreign rays which cross and oppose one another, we always discover the genius of Florian. We recognise at each page this sweet child of the fields, often a dreamer, sometimes playful, who smiles with so much tenderness, who climbs the mountain to hear more distinctly the herdman's pipe and the shepherd's reed, who reposes with such a melancholy charm by the banks of the cherry-tree spring to collect his thoughts, to listen to the first symphonies of his soul, those distant songs which carry us away on the clouds. Every page of the tender poet carries us back to the fair morn of life, when our souls so joyously expanded to the sun. Every scene reopens to us through the entangled thicket of the passions, the clear vista toward the dawn of love, and the clear ether of the sky!

Apropos of similes there is one a thousand times better than mine. The queen, Marie-Antoinette, forgot in the perusal of Florian the first murmurs of the Revolution. "In reading Florian it seems as if I was eating milk porridge." This reflection is not exactly that of an ingenuous mind, but it is just and pointed.

BOUFFLERS.

On a fine spring morning, in the middle of the eighteenth century, in the country about Luneville, a young chevalier, of about twenty years of age, was giving a loose rein to his large English horse, inspirited by the excitement of the chase and the odor of the fresh pasture. Some score of hounds of all variety of form and color, scattered through the valley, kept up a lively echoing cry. Our chevalier followed them with his eyes, without troubling himself about the damage they were doing in their wandering course. What matters the harvest, when the flower dazzles and intoxicates us — when one is profoundly happy? He was happy, happy in the enjoyment of the morning, happy in the enjoyment of the pure sky, the verdant landscape, in the fullness of perfect freedom. Every man once in his youth — perhaps but once — has seized with a hasty grasp as it glided by, that sweet happiness, which, like a ray of a spring-day sun, drinks in the dew on the primrose of the meadow.

This young chevalier was Stanislaus de Boufflers, who had passed his infancy and early youth at the

court of Luneville, under the eye of his mother, the celebrated Marchioness de Boufflers. He had lived without care, pursuing his studies in the open air, badly enough brought up by the Abbé Porquet, "who could not repeat his Benedicite, although he was almoner to the king of Poland." As may be seen, Boufflers had in his mother and his tutor, two guardians easy to content; two guardians who forgave everything in a youth of spirit, and our young chevalier knew well how to obtain forgiveness.

His time was passed in riding, hunting, and dancing. "When I think of this court of Luneville," said Boufflers, when he had grown old, "I seem to be thinking of some pages of romance rather than some years of my life." He was a handsome youth, full of grace and of a fine figure, having a sally or a madrigal ever on his lips. He danced marvellously, painted prettily, played tolerably on the violin, brought down a deer splendidly. I came near forgetting that he picked up here and there some crumbs of literature and science, at the foot of the table of the court where the guests were Voltaire, Madame Duchâtelet, Montesquieu, St. Lambert, President Hénault, M. de Tressan, Madame de Grammont. The Abbé Porquet himself, although his tutor, succeeded from time to time in getting the better of the laziness of the chevalier. The Abbe Porquet was a quasi man of letters, deficient in scarcely anything but wit, science, and imagination. He taught all he knew to his pupil. It sometimes happened that he led him into a world unknown to both of them—into transcendental metaphysics—

superhuman philosophy. Thus on the morning that Boufflers, as we have described, was galloping away on his fine horse, the Abbé Porquet had proposed to him the question—a question a thousand times solved by the greatest minds, and yet always to be solved anew—What is the chief good here below? “I shall be delighted to study this grave question,” Boufflers had said; “I therefore intend to mount my horse, and meditate upon it in the open air.” So he had gone off with his dogs, leaving the abbé standing. The brave almoner, as he beheld him disappear in the cloud of dust raised by his horse’s gallop, said, shaking his head, “There goes a youth who will pass his life on horseback, but who will never make his way in the world.”

Let us resume our ride with the chevalier. Who knows if we shall not find with him the solution to the abbé’s question? After a thousand bounds over the grassy plain, through woods and cornfields, the horse stopped, entirely out of breath, at the corner of a little clump of elms and oaks. His horse had gone so well for three hours, that the chevalier did not attempt to urge him further. He leaped off gayly on the grass, took off his bridle, and allowed him to browse on the edge of the wood. For himself, after having called some of his dogs, he began to breakfast on a partridge and some bread, washing the whole down by some quaffs of water from the neighboring spring. “A horse, a dog, a little grass in the shade, is the chief good,” he murmured after his first libation.

Let me paint with a single touch, the landscape in which our chevalier was enjoying so much happi-

ness. A little valley, receding between two hills, crowned with large, thickly-leaved trees; a little hamlet scattered cheerfully on the horizon, where the eye rested upon a church spire. In the valley some woods enclosing fields of unripe grain and clover, here and there an orchard whitened with blossoms, a large meadow through which a lazy stream was flowing, a few rustic bridges, a quiet herd of red and brown cows. In the distance, in the direction of the little hamlet, a chateau, the gray towers of which were alone perceptible above the trees. Finally above all, the smile of heaven, the cheerful rays of the sun, the music of the lark, the expansive joy of Nature. "Yes," exclaimed Boufflers, giving himself up heart and soul to the scene, "a horse, a dog."

The words died on his lips in spite of himself. There appeared, as if by magic, on the skirts of the wood, a young and pretty peasant-girl, with a coquettish looking cap, a white boddice and red petticoat, with a pot of milk in her hand. "Delightful," he exclaimed, raising himself to see her better: "one might think that it was a fable of La Fontaine, I forgot that after a dog and a horse, a woman should be considered the chief good, and this one comes in the nick of time."

He saw with joyful heart that she would have to pass close to him in order to cross the brook on a little wooden bridge, or rather on two boards answering as a bridge for nimble feet. He rose to meet her. What did he say? What did she answer? I was not there: I don't know. According to him, she had a very pretty mouth, and conse-

quently a great deal of wit. Her name was Elizabeth, he called her Aline. She was sixteen, and the daughter of a farmer of the valley. The chevalier wanted to kiss her. The horse neighed, the dogs barked, she defended herself like a bird trying to fly from the birdcatcher, the pot of milk fell, she gave a sweet, sharp cry: but the kiss was taken. "Oh, Heavens!" she exclaimed with girlish fright, taking up her pot, "more than half the milk is spilled."—"Wait!" said Boufflers, "that is only half a misfortune."

He went and filled the pot at the fountain. On his return he was so wildly gay and tender; he talked nonsense so well that Aline was induced to remain for a short half hour; she listened to him in delighted surprise, as to the sweet murmur of a fountain, the twitter of a bullfinch. It was better than this, for it was love that spoke. Never had love spoken under more favorable circumstances. The breeze, still fresh, spread a perfume of pure happiness over all, the bee buzzed gayly about the water-lilies of the brook, the flocks of pigeons flew across the meadow joyously beating their wings.

"My dear Aline, I wish I was your brother; that is not, however, exactly what I want to say."—"And I should like to be your sister."—"Ah, I love you at least quite as much as if you were." On hearing this she allowed him to kiss her a second time without much resistance. While conversing, Boufflers leaned over the edge of the brook, and gathered a red and white daisy, a sprig of primrose, a green blade of reed grass, a sprig of thyme, and marjoram—a forget-me-not, and some other little

flowers, tying the whole together with a bit of rush. "I should like to offer you a throne with this. But," he continued, attaching the bouquet to the boddice of Aline, "if I could, this bouquet would be none the better placed."

Aline said every moment that she was going. "*I must really go now ;*" but she still remained — her feet rooted to the grass, her eyes glancing in the brook. Some woodcutters came along. "Adieu," said she sadly. "Adieu, my dear Aline. Adieu, adieu."

She took up her pot, sighed, and slowly withdrew. "Ah," said Boufflers, "why can not I go with her everywhere — always with her?" He followed her with his looks, which she stealthily returned ; but she was soon lost in a thicket of beeches ; he still caught a glimpse of her coquettish bonnet, her light petticoat, a hand which gave a last signal of farewell — and she disappeared.

The chevalier, without fear and without reproach, leaped on his horse, whistled to his dogs, and sighing took the road to Luneville. A little this side of it he came across the grave Abbé Perquet, reclining under an old elm-tree, and intently perusing St. Augustine. "I have to keep a somewhat distant watch over you. Where did you come from, vagabond?" exclaimed the abbé to him, rising. "I have taken, may it please you, a lesson in philosophy in your absence. You have talked a great deal to me about the sovereign good : I have found three things to-day, a horse, a dog, and a woman." — "St. Augustine has enumerated two hundred and eighty-eight opinions on this subject. Philosophers can not agree on this chapter. Accord-

ing to Crates the sovereign good is a prosperous voyage; according to Archytas, it is winning a battle; according to Chrysippus, it is the building of a superb edifice; according to Epicurus, it is pleasure; according to Palemon, it is eloquence; according to Heraclitus, it is fortune; according to Simonides, it is a friend; according to Euripides, it is the love of a beautiful woman. The ancient philosophers were no wiser than you are, monsieur le chevalier. We will, if you please, continue our lesson as we return to the house. The sovereign good, monsieur, is God: God, who alone can, at all hours and at all seasons, respond to the aspirations of our souls, the rest is all vanity. What is human friendship, the glory of a battle, the love of a beautiful woman? a little smoke which passes by and blinds us. All is vanity, all is deception. Where we seek for liberty, we find only the slavery which is imposed by grandeur. Where we seek peace in solitude, we find only disquiet and agitation. Where we seek pleasure, we find only bitterness. Mistaken good, shadows, illusions! The soul is worthy of heaven; all that is earthly is unworthy of it. The soul is formed to love God, to return to heaven its true home. God has revealed himself everywhere, to the most barbarous nations. Hear Seneca: *Nulla quippe gens unquam.*—"Oh, the devil, if you talk Latin, you will not know what you are saying; for my part I will not listen any longer. Come, all this about a Latin phrase, I will spare you the rest. To end the matter, I am of your opinion: the sovereign good is God; but God is placed too high for me, and meanwhile, until I rise to heaven, you will not consider it amiss, my dear abbe

that I should look for the sovereign good in a good horse, a pretty woman, and a fine dog. Oh, if you knew how brightly the sun was shining yonder." — "Be off, you profane fellow, be off sinner, give the rein to your bad passions!" Thereupon Boufflers spurred his horse.

It was all over with him, he had found the sovereign good of the world — love and poetry. On that day, the only one in his life, he was in love, he was a poet! However, once again, in his old age, we shall find him a poet, thanks to that sublime magician called memory.

II.

The rest of his days, the abbé, the chevalier, the Marquis of Boufflers, was only a man of wit, more or less of a rhymster. He was content with the inheritance of the Grammonts, the Bellegardes, the St. Simons, the Richeliens. There are plenty of abbés, chevaliers, and marquises, who could, I imagine, live brilliantly on a much smaller one. Saint Lambert had surnamed him *Voisenon the Great*. There is his portrait.

Boufflers had not an opportunity to return to the valley of the milkmaid. At the end of a few days he had to leave for Paris, in obedience to the orders of King Stanislaus. "What was he to become in Paris?" A bi-hop, said his mother. He gallantly entered the seminary of St. Sulpice, with a lively song on his lips. The seminary was not the exact counterpart of the valley of Luneville. One did not meet there in the morning, under a smiling sun,

a pretty milkmaid with a red petticoat. Our chevalier was at first most heartily wearied. He soon began to regret his unrestrained liberty, his English horse, his bounding dogs. As he could not pray to God sincerely, he did not pray at all. It was more simple and more catholic. He wished to get out of the place. How could he do so? How do so without scandal, or how give piquancy to the scandal? Boufflers took counsel with himself. The idea struck him of writing out his adventure with Aline. He trimmed his pen, and devoted himself to it. "I give myself up to you, my pen. Until now I have led you; lead me now, and command your master. Relate to me some history which I do not know. It is the same thing to me whether you commence at the middle or the end." This is the prettiest commencement possible for a French tale. What is strange is, that the pen, this master of a lawless mind, commences simply at the beginning. But let us continue: "As for you, my readers, I notify you in advance, that it is for my pleasure, and not for yours, that I write. You are surrounded with friends, mistresses, and lovers—you are not obliged to resort to me to amuse yourselves; but I, for my part, am alone, and wish to get as good company out of myself as I can." The entire story is in this charming tone. If it was in twelve volumes it would be read with delight, but it scarcely contains twelve pages. You will readily understand that the pen has nothing better to relate than the story of the milk-pail. By little and little, emboldened by the truth of the first page, it launches into all the fantasies of fiction; it seeks to torment Boufflers, by representing to him under

pleasant metamorphoses, the ever-smiling form of Aline. Now she is an adorable marchioness, now a queen of Golconda, at last a little old woman — still amiable, clad in palm-leaves. Time undertook to make a history almost out of this little story. Boufflers divined his life so well that he has sketched it out there in broad lines.

This story forms the entire works of Boufflers; what he subsequently wrote was but a slight arabesque to frame this pretty pastel.

Boufflers remained but a short time at St. Sulpice. He went into the world, even the gay world: he went to Versailles. According to Bachaumont, he read his story to Madame Dubarry. She was so charmed with the milkmaid, that she conceived from that moment the idea of having cows at the Trianon, of milking them with her pretty and almost royal hands, and on certain days, when envious, dressing herself in a white bodice and red petticoat, in order to charm Louis XV. once more by this pastoral disguise.

In less than a few weeks the story spread from mouth to mouth, from great lords to marchionesses. More than a thousand manuscript copies were scattered about Versailles and Paris. The seminary of St. Sulpice itself was not exempt. Everybody was outraged, and everybody applauded — Boufflers at the head of them. The story was printed and signed with the initials of the name of the author. When the scandal, going beyond the bounds of the seminary, the Abbé de Boufflers became again the Chevalier de Boufflers. One fine morning he laid aside the bands, mounted on horseback, and set out gal-

lantly, his sword by his side, for the campaign of Hanover. King Stanislaus had bestowed upon him from childhood forty thousand livres revenue in benefices. How could an abbé abandon such benefices? Reassure yourself. At the same time that he took the sword, he also assumed the cross of Malta, the strange privilege of participating in the performance of the holy offices in surplice and in uniform, offering thus the curious spectacle of a prior, captain of hussars. He wrote a letter to Grimm on this subject, of which this is the best passage:—

“I was on the high road to fortune. Who knows but that a few more intrigues might not have placed me at the head of the clergy? But I liked better to be *aid-de-camp* in the army of Soubise. *Tahit sua quemque voluptas*. Do you count as nothing the cry of indignation, which was raised at the freedom of my conduct? They were the fools who cried, you will tell me. Truly so much the worse. It would have been better if they had been the people of sense, for they would have made less noise. The fools have the advantage of numbers, and it is that which decides. It is no use for us to make war on them, we shall not weaken them: they will always be the masters. Always the kings of the universe, they will continue to dictate the law. There will not be a practice or a usage introduced of which they are not the authors. In fine, they always force the people of sense to speak, and almost to think like themselves, because it is in the order of things that the conquered should speak the language of their conquerors. In accordance with the extreme veneration, with which you see that I am imbued for the

supreme power of fools, am I wrong for seeking to be in favor with them? and should I not regard my reconciliation with the sovereigns of the world as the best act of my life? Pardon me for diverting myself a little in the course of my reasonings, it is to aid myself, and you as well, in supporting their tediousness! Moreover, Horace, your friend and your model, permits us to laugh in speaking the truth; and the first philosopher of antiquity was surely not Heraclitus. I ought, you will tell me, in accordance with my respect for fools, to have quitted my calling without assuming another; but fools have told me that one must have a calling in society. I proposed to them to take that of a man of letters. They told me to take care not to do so, for I had too much wit for that. I asked them what I should do then, and this was the reply: 'Some ages ago we wished you to be a gentleman; it is our will at present that every gentleman should go to the war.' Thereupon I had a blue coat made, assumed the cross of Malta, and was off."

Bouffiers was brave in war, and gay, but too much of a philosopher. After a sword thrust he reflected. A soldier should not reflect on the field of battle. Bouffiers, besides, always had another profession in addition to his apparent one—a libertine abbé, a philosophical soldier, a satirical courtier, a diplomatic song-writer, a republican courtier. In 1792 he emigrated, and from the depths of a savage solitude undertook to defend liberty. He wrote a book on free will. At the end of his career, having run well through the round of follies, he wrote on *human reason*, in the true style of an academician.

After the campaign of Hesse, he made a journey in Switzerland, staff in hand, his baggage on his back, a true artist journey. You have read the account of this journey in his letters to his mother, charming letters where every word says something. As a painter of pastel portraits, Boufflers achieved innumerable successes at Geneva. He only asked a crown a day to paint a husband, but he painted the portrait of the wife in the bargain.

On his return from his journey in Switzerland, the Marshal de Castries had him appointed governor of Senegal, and the island of Gorea. There everybody was content under his rule, except himself. He soon returned, abandoning himself body and soul as formerly, to the intoxications of a careless youth, all blooming with amours, jokes, and trifling verses. His youth lasted nearly fifty years: it seemed as if time passed without touching him. He was of the small number of those who lived thirty years in a quarter of a century. He religiously followed all the frivolities of fashion — cloths of three colors, gold and silver embroidery, bugles and spangles, wigs with queues and frizzled, in fine, as he said himself, they had then discovered the important secret of putting on a man's back a palette garnished with all tints and all shades. "These coats," said Grimm, "give our young people at the court a decided advantage over the finest of Nuremberg dolls."

In 1788, somewhat wearied with noise, dress, fêtes, and women, Boufflers, at last siding with age, and concluding that he had reached fifty, made the preliminary visits necessary for admission to the Academy. He already belonged to the academies of Nancy and

Lyons. The French Academy received him as an old spoiled child. His discourse was painfully serious. He went back to the deluge, the creation of the world, to chaos—a long road leading to nothing. Here ends Boufflers, the true Boufflers, of whom history will retain pleasant recollections. The Academy was the tomb of that wit which might have rivalled Hamiltou in grace, and Voltaire in point. So here lies the Chevalier de Boufflers, not the only one whom the Academy has killed.

There is also another Boufflers, known under the name of the Marquis de Boufflers, who married, was deputy to the states-general, founded a club with Malouet and La Rochefoucault, wrote a treatise on *free will*, became an agriculturist, and died soberly in 1815.* But this one has nothing in common with ours. It is the same, you insist, it is still the Boufflers who loved so poetically the fair M^{lle} in the valley with her pot of milk. You are right. You remind me of a last trait which I will relate to you. But a word first, in passing, in judgment of the poet and his work.

Boufflers was the life and soul of the gay and dissolute society, which, 1790, dispersed for ever—the society which lived on joy and festivity without care for death. He skimmed lightly in his vagrant career over the gilded reign of Madame de Pompadour, the imperial sway of Madame Dubarry, the adorable grace of Marie-Antoinette. He was the choice wit of the court of the king of Prussia, and

* He died at Paris, and was buried at Père la Chaise, where his tomb is to be recognised by this inscription, worthy of an ancient philosopher: "*My friends, believe that I am asleep.*"

of the king of Poland. He was everywhere in the same season, but particularly on the roads: he was the most indefatigable traveller on dry land of his time. It was said of him: "He is the most errant of knights;" and everybody knows the charming remark of another wit. M. de Tressant met him on the highway. "Chevalier, I am delighted to find you at home!" In turning over at random the slight collection of Boufflers, we shall find the echo of his time, already antiquated, the scentless roses with which he decked the bodices of his noble mistresses.

But must we look farther into his work? His only production, worthy of a poet, is the piece entitled the Heart, in which the wit makes us almost pardon the licentiousness. Champfort called all this confectionary. It is well enough when the poet says it himself to some indolent duchess; but these gay warblings can not easily obtain auditors without their appropriate accessories. It was in this that the charm of this improvisator consisted, as he always had some rhyme and wit at his command, in turn for Madame Dugazon, the Prince du Ligne, the Duke de Choiseul, Madame de Luxembourg, Madame Branchu, the cat of Madame * * *, the Duke de Nivernais, or for any other passing fancy.

After having tried his hand on light poetry, he undertook to translate the odes of Horace, Seneca's Maxims, some verses of Dante's Paradise, some cantos of Ariosto. May these poets pardon him! He has translated the ideas, he has not been able to reproduce the color which is the life, splendor, and perfume of all poetry.

After verse came prose, which is not of the worst. Remember the letters, remember *Aline*. There are other letters and other tales. We can still find a charm in re-reading *the Derrise*. *Ah, yes!* an interest, too, in some pages of philosophy torn out of the Universal Encyclopedia, and from his work on *Free Will*. This latter work, such as it is, deserves notice. At an earlier age, Boufflers would have written a charming book upon this subject, in the style of Sterne. He announces at the start that he is passing through unknown regions to an unknown end. He loses himself at the very first step among the thousand barren paths of metaphysics. It would have needed all the powers of his youth to have lined those paths with flowers and to have enticed us within them. He has, however, here and there preserved the ingenious turns, the delicate grace, the gay reasoning of his time. He throws no light on the subject, but he sometimes approaches the pith of the matter in a happy manner. He scatters, by chance, I imagine, ideas which are images, arguments which are pictures. His book is useful in this respect, that it proves that the human mind will never rise to these inaccessible heights.

A graceful little volume could be made up from the thoughts which Boufflers has scattered along the highways.

“It is with the riches of thought as with other riches: we become more avaricious as we become richer.

“The philosopher deprived of his wealth, resembles an athlete stripped for combat.

“No one knows the worth of his own mind. It is strange that the poorest are the most content.

“The man of letters alone of all men, according to the beautiful expression of one of the ancients, lives with unconcealed aims.

“Habit is a second nature. There is, perhaps, a third, which is called imitation.

“Fame likes people to make advances to her. There are some of whom she would not know what to say, if they did not take the trouble to tell her.

“Hope is a payment in advance on all goods.

“Kings like better to be amused than adored.

“It is only divinity that has a sufficient fund of good nature not to be wearied with all the homage which is rendered to it.”

Among the many descriptions of Boufflers, I extract some lines by the Prince de Ligne, who knew thoroughly the heart and mind of everybody. “M. de Boufflers thought much, but unfortunately it was always on the passing topic. One might well wish to collect all the ideas which he squandered together with his time and his money. Perhaps he had more genius than he could control, when the fire of his youth was in full force. This genius must have been, not only independent itself, but must have controlled its possessor; therefore was it that it shone at once with the capricious brilliancy of a will-o'-the-wisp, a perfect and refined delicacy, and a light grace which is never frivolous. The talent of giving point to an idea by means of antithesis, is one of the distinctive qualities of his mind, to which nothing is foreign. Happily he does not know everything. He has plucked the flower of all knowledge, and he will surprise by his profundity those who thought him superficial, and by his superficiality all those who have discovered how profound he could be. The basis of his character is an unbounded

goodness of heart. He could not support the idea of a suffering being; he would deprive himself of bread to support even a wicked person, and above all an enemy. "*Poor rogue!*" he would say. He had a servant on his estate whom everybody denounced as a thief, in spite of which he always retained her; and being asked why, answered, "Who would take her?" His laugh was like that of a child. He carried his head somewhat inclined. He had a habit of twisting his thumbs before him like Harlequin, or rubbing his hands behind his back, as if he was warming himself. His eyes were small and pleasing, and had a smiling expression. There was something peculiarly amiable in the expression of his face. There was a graceful simplicity, gayety, and artlessness in his manner. He had sometimes the stupid looks of La Fontaine. You would say that he was thinking of nothing when he was thinking the most. He did not willingly put himself forward, and was all the more appreciated for his modesty. His manners were so thoroughly amiable, that he never showed any malice except in an occasional look or smile. He so much distrusted his turn for epigram, that he perhaps leaned too much to the opposite side. He seems to be profuse in his praises in order to prevent his satirical vein from displaying itself."

This slight portrait represents Boufflers at the approach of age, Boufflers, after he had become an accademician, father of a family, a politician.

In spite of his worship of liberty, he deserted the Constituent Assembly on the 10th of August, and departed with his family, like a true philosopher

who submits to everything, for the court of Prussia where he was received with open arms by Prince Henry. From there he went to the court of Poland, where he was desirous of founding a French colony. His emigration, which lasted eight years, was not altogether insupportable. He lived, although at the court, and in a time of war, a quiet, almost a studious life, playing with his daughter, and showing her how, for better or worse, rhyme is joined to reason; loving his wife, whom he had married, a widow, who was handsome, and had none too much sense; walking in the open air, rain or shine, according to his custom. Although almost the same as an exile, he still kept horses and dogs; he was, therefore, the least to be pitied of all the *émigrés*.

In 1800, he returned to France, but no longer as courtier or deputy, scarce even, academician; he was altogether undeceived in regard to the vanities of life; took refuge in a little country estate, which he almost transformed into a farm; and became an agriculturist, in all the simplicity of the patriarchs. He built a little, planted a great deal, and cultivated after his style, that is to say, as an optimist. His harvests were fine; so were his vintages. He had remained faithful to the friendships which he had formed in his happy days.—“Here is my rhyming dictionary,” said he, pointing to his plough and harrow; “here are my poems,” said he, pointing to his wheat, his cabbages, his hay, and his oats; “here,” he continued, “I am always nobly inspired; I commune with Nature; it is a pious work, which will gain me pardon for all my trifling productions.”

III.

But I am impatient to arrive at this last picture, which will complete my sketch of Boufflers.

Amid the ever-recurring follies of his long youth, Boufflers had now and then found time to ask news of Aline, who had not exactly become queen of Golconda. He has related in various ways, in both prose and verse, her real history. In 1800, on returning from Berlin to Paris, he was desirous at all hazards, of seeing Aline again, or, at least, the scene of their early love; he wished to reinvigorate his poor heart, beaten by a thousand rose-water tempests, in the fresh fountains of that spring-like love which had surprised him in the morning of life.

He stopped at Luneville. But where was the enchanted palace of Stanislaus? the court of Madame de Boufflers? The poet took a horse at the post-house, and followed the road to the valley. It was in the spring; he found nature again all fresh and balmy, as heretofore; the same verdant and leafy crowns on the two hills; the warbling groves; the fields already waving with the harvest; the budding orchards; the smoking hamlet; and the spire losing itself with the music of its bells, in the sky.—“There is but one thing wanting here,” murmured Boufflers, “it is Aline, it is my love, it is my youth! It is in vain that nature sheds abroad all her treasures, and sings in all her varied notes; she will never be but the frame, whereof the passions of man will form the picture. But why do I speak so seriously? I have the air of a philosopher. Alas! is it a philosopher

who should return here? Come, let us be young still, if it be possible!"

Boufflers asked a moment's youth from the magic power of memory; he dismounted from his horse, stretched himself out on the grass, in the shadow of the old elm-tree, on the bank of the brook, and looked toward the skirts of the wood, as if Aline were to reappear with her pot and her red petticoat. It was in vain that he sought to deceive himself; he was not enough of a poet to see shadows.—"Ah, yes!" he suddenly exclaimed, "the Abbé Porquet was right: God alone is unchangeable; God has not made our souls for earth, except when we are twenty, and meet an Aline upon the road.

He wished to pursue his disenchantment to the end; he remounted his horse, with the intention of breakfasting at the little cottage, where he should, doubtless, learn some news of the heroine of the sole romance of his life. He dismounted at the threshold of a sorry inn, whose sign gave no good promise. He entered, and called for something to eat, seating himself, at the same time, at a rustic table, still wet with the last bumper. The hostess began forthwith to break the eggs and to scrape the chicory. Boufflers wanted to speak to her about Aline, without knowing how to begin, when he saw a good old farmer's wife enter, in a woollen petticoat, who approached the fire with an earthen pot in her hand.—"I am not deceived; it is indeed she; it is Aline; it is Elizabeth!"

The old farmer's wife let her pitcher fall with surprise; but this time Boufflers did not spring forward to pick it up.—"What! it is you, monsieur the chevalier! Heavens! what a meeting! my heart is all

in a flutter!"—"This meeting does not equal the first one," said Boufflers, looking at his poor Aline from head to foot; "neither is it a pot of milk to-day."—"It is indeed true; we had not gray hairs down there by the brook."—"Give me a kiss," said Boufflers, "this time we can do so before witnesses."

They embraced with a warmth which touched the hostess.—"You will breakfast with me."—"Yes, if you will come and breakfast at my house, two steps from here; you know a widow of sixty-seven is not much to be feared; come, I have much to say to you."

Boufflers paid the hostess the value of some twenty omelettes and thirty salads, and followed Aline, who had loosened the horse's bridle to lead him. The poor woman was so delighted that she talked without stopping to take breath.—"Only think, that every time that I see a fine horse, the adventure of the spilled milk immediately comes to my mind. Now, even on seeing this one, I immediately thought of you. Ah, if you knew how often I have passed by there, for the mere pleasure of it! I knew very well beforehand that I should not meet you, but I was none the less happy in passing. We acted very foolishly there; but, as the proverb says, 'Fooling with two is always agreeable.' I have no regrets; we are young but once; you could hardly believe how it has filled my life; every year, in the first days of spring; but you are going to laugh and ridicule me; it is all the same—you must know it—I go, led by a supernatural power, and gather a nosegay on the bank of the brook. Ah, yours has lasted a long time! Come and see the nosegay of the past year."

She took Boufflers by the hand, and led him to the alcove in which her bed stood, and showed him a faded nosegay fastened to the serge curtains by a consecrated branch.—“You can not think,” said Boufflers, sighing, “how this recollection of my youth has always embalmed my heart; it has been more than the half of my life; so much so, that being still young, and hardly expecting to see you again, but seeking to deceive myself, I wrote a story which is called *Aline*; the first pages are true, but the rest is only a romance.”—“Tell me that story; I am curious to know what you can have imagined about me.”—“I have not made you a saint of the calendar, but I have painted you under such fresh and attractive colors, that everybody has adored you in Paris, in the provinces and elsewhere.”—“I have no doubt of it. While I was so heartily loved, I was peaceably planting my cabbages, rocking my babies, and thinking of you. This has not prevented me from being tolerably happy; however, for some years back everything seems to be leaving me. I am a widow; I have lost two children, the field which supported me has been divided among others. I have, however, a happy disposition; and when I have wept and prayed to God, the time still passes happily enough.”

While she was speaking, she lit the fire. Boufflers cast his eye about the room. An antiquated chamber, a broken pavement, some worm-eaten beams, between which the spider had here and there spun his web; an old oak dresser, rudely carved, covered with common earthenware and pewter platters; small windows, protected on the outside by osier curtains; a healthy

odor of pure water and brown bread; a gigantic fireplace; two colored prints on the mantelpiece, under a rusty gun, covered with dust; in a word, a delightful atmosphere of good homely poverty, such was what Boufflers found in the house of his aged Aline.

They breakfasted gayly, each, however, concealing a touch of melancholy. After breakfast, Boufflers asked to see her little farm. He comprehended for the first time in his life the calm and serious pleasure the earth affords to those who cultivate it. He vowed to consecrate his last days to agriculture.

The two old lovers embraced for the last time; the parting was touching: both shed tears; they commended each other to God, with true devotion. At last, Boufflers mounted his horse and rode off. The horse, who had fared at least as well as his master, the horse who had had the best of clover and the best of oats, would have traversed the little valley at a single bound; but Boufflers held him in check, wishing still to breathe leisurely all the intoxication of memory.

He returned to Lunéville, pale and exhausted; he had been a poet that day, for the second time in his life. How many better known rhymers are there who have not been poets even once in their lives?

RIVAROL.

IN 1774, during a beautiful sunset, an exiled country squire, turned innkeeper, was walking with a serious air before a little inn, at Bagnols, in Languedoc, and admiring seven or eight pretty children, very happy and noisy, whose father he believed himself by good right to be. He was admiring at the same time a beautiful vine that he had planted between the door and the window. A little woman, rather pale, having at her breast her sixteenth child, came out of the inn. Her fifteenth child, crying, cling to her petticoat; two others, both very nearly of the same age, followed her to the threshold of the door, pulling the ears of a big dog which seemed resigned with good grace to the infliction. It was a very blooming and happy family. They all formed a circle around the poor dog — one got upon his back, another harnessed him with reeds — one fastened a bell to his paw, another threw a cat upon his back; finally they all threw themselves pell-mell upon the ground with the poor beast, crying aloud, frolicking, and acting like kittens playing with the cinders. There was not one even to the child at the breast

who did not wish to be of the party. He stretched out his little arms, made such a noise, and cried so, that his mother was obliged to seat him upon the dog, who took good care, like an intelligent creature, as he was, not to move. "I have not counted them," said the father, "but I think they are all there except our three big boys at school, and our dear Antoine."—"Nor have I counted them," said the mother, with a smile; "but I know very well that there are twelve here out of the sixteen. But where is Antoine?" She looked through the fig-trees of the garden. "He is gone as usual to gossip with your cousin's daughters."—"It was worth the trouble truly to send him for so long to the Jesuits at Avignon. He who was called the handsome abbé will be abandoned by monseigneur the bishop to our own resources, if he continues to neglect his Latin in this way. But here comes Antoine back."

The innkeeper's wife went out to meet the eldest of the family. He was a tall youth of eighteen, of a noble and charming expression of face, of ardent and enterprising mind; in a word it was Rivarol. "In truth, my dear child, during nearly the six weeks that you have been back with us, you have forgotten all your learning."—"Learning!" said the young Rivarol, who already knew how to speak well; "do not be afraid: a man who thinks, always knows more than one who learns: a man who acts is worth a thousand times more than a man who thinks; in proof of which, there is my father who has mounted on a stool to get a bunch of grapes—"—"Your father does not know what he does, and you do n't know what you say. But to sum up, some

common sense is necessary. Now, that you know Greek and Latin, do you think of passing your life in idleness like a gentleman?"—"Why not?" said Rivarol, tossing his head with an air of natural pride. "But it is necessary that you should be something in the world, I imagine."—"Well," exclaimed the young man, "I will be a count."—"That is as good as anything else," said the father, smiling; "but count of what?"—"Count of Rivarol—it is all simple enough. I will set out for Paris with all the ready money to be had in the cottage. My mother will manage my affairs so well that there will be more than usual. Once in Paris, I will elbow my way to greatness: I will make my fortune, prepare the way for my brothers, portion my sisters, marry a duchess, elevate your tavern into a marquisate."—"What nonsense!" said the innkeeper's wife, with a sigh. "He is no longer a child but a man who has taken leave of his senses. Your father is the cause of the mischief; for if he had not preached to his children the glories of a fanciful descent——"—"Fanciful!" exclaimed the Corsican, raising his head to the height of the door of the inn. "Carlo Rivaroli, my great-grandfather, was a grand duke of Italy; Jacobi Rivaroli, my grandfather, was governor of Corsica for six months; moreover, my father held a fief on the river d'Oreo."—"All this does not prevent your having been innkeeper of Bagnols for nineteen years. Do your best, there is the esentcheon of your children." And the innkeeper's wife pointed to the bush of mistletoe, hanging over the inn door.

As he had said he would, the young Rivarol soon

set out for Paris, accompanied by two law-students, whom he scarcely knew before. They made the journey gayly, sometimes on foot, sometimes in a coach, sometimes in a wagon, according to fair weather, rain, or their purse which often prescribed the simplest conveyance. In spite of his purse, Rivarol had scarce lost sight of the paternal roof ere he assumed the airs of a great lord. When asked his name at an hotel, he answered with the greatest coolness, the chevalier, count, or marquis of Rivarol and his friends. He arrived at Paris toward the end of the autumn of 1774—boldly alighted at the Hotel d'Espagne, making his title ring louder than his crowns, without disquieting himself the least in the world about the morrow. However, soon after his arrival in Paris, he met certain schoolboy-friends who had drank their pint at his father's tavern. He feared that his title of Count of Rivarol, announced before them, would be received with ridicule. To prevent this, he took another and not so high-sounding a name, calling himself M. de Parcieux, with the consent of the academician of that name, who thought that he belonged to his family, thanks to his wit, and the recommendation of D'Alembert; but sometime after, a nephew of the savant required him to prove the right he had to bear that name, which he could not do. Let Grimm speak: "He has avenged himself very nobly in taking that of the chevalier de Rivarol, which they say he has no better right to, but which, it is to be hoped, that he will content himself with, so long as he is not forced to seek for another."

Almost on his entrance into the literary world, he

set to work to study and translate Dante, a labor which he compared to that of the young artists who copy the designs of Michael Angelo. In spite of his natural indolence, he strongly recommended the toil of science to writers. "To write, one should show himself armed at all points, like Minerva issuing from the head of Jupiter."

His translation of the *Inferno* continues the most spirited of all the translations. Captivated by the wild beauties of this poem, Rivarol has raised himself to the height of the poet. Buffon said, "It is not a translation, it is a continued series of creations." It must be said that subsequently Rivarol originated this expression in regard to Buffon—dignity of style. Rivarol, however, did not flatter all the productions of this great man. He said of his son: "He is the worst chapter in the natural history of his father. Between the son and the father the whole world intervenes."

During the first years of his sojourn at Paris, he he lived no one knows how, but always gay, lively, and sportive. He was met everywhere where talent had the *entrée*, in the saloons, the cafés, the theatres, and the caveau. The caveau was then a smoky den, like the entrance of Avernus. In this lamp-light of Parnassus, according to a verse of Lemierre, Rivarol was soon the favorite talker. It was there that the young Marquis de Champeenetz registered the first of Rivarol's witticisms. By slow degrees he glided, under the cover of certain persons who took a fancy to him, into the saloons most difficult of access. In that heyday of aristocracy, if his name did not save him entirely, his

genius protected his name. He paid his way by bold assurance while still young. He knew that a man who had the will could always find a sunny place in this world. More than one poet had lived even before his day, like La Fontaine's fox, at the expense of those who listened to him. To speculate on flattery was a vulgar business, quite unworthy of Rivarol. He preferred to speculate on satire. The world, he used to say, was a vast arena, where good and bad, wolves and lambs, were mingled together. I will be vicious, I shall be feared; I will make my fortune. At each scratch of my claw, they will applaud me — at each growl and bite, they will throw me a bone." This system succeeded to perfection. His first sarcasms were repeated from mouth to mouth. Buffon, who liked satire, and who feared it, received Rivarol with a thousand marks of favor. A great number of wits and distinguished persons showed the same disposition as M. de Buffon. The contest was who should have Rivarol at his table — who should carry him off to his country-house. Voltaire invited him to pass a summer at Ferney. Rivarol had no longer any reason to trouble himself about his larder. He lived, therefore, very much as he fancied, happy in his indolence and carelessness. He rose at two o'clock in the afternoon, dressed himself, went out into society, and always made a resolution to go to work the next day.

Panckoucke offered him fifty crowns a month to write for the *Mercury*. "Very well," said Rivarol, with the indifference of a lord; "with these fifty crowns I will pay a secretary and a valet." As he had said, so he did. This secretary and valet aided

wonderfully his aristocratic pretensions. "This Pancoucke has given me a secretary, as if it was worth the trouble to preserve my wit; it is only those who have a meager stock who do so, like Champfort and his like." Champfort, who was far from being a beggar in wit, was not of the calibre of Rivarol. Champfort was witty only at certain times, when he had sharpened his wit, and prepared it in the morning. Rivarol was always witty.

He did not find everybody disposed to admire or to fear him. The greater part of the men of letters, Marie-Joseph Chénier at their head, made fierce war on his titles of nobility, and his literary titles. Marie-Joseph Chénier wrote a good sharp satire against him, two lines of which recur to me:—

Of Literature the hope forlorn,
A Quixote and intriguer born.

One reproached him with having been born in a kitchen, another with not having put salt enough in his sauces; and a thousand other insults in the same style. They even produced at the Variétés a piece of buffoonery ridiculing him and Champeenetz. This Champeenetz was a marquis, one of the favorites of the school of Rivarol, living in the same errors—witty enough when his friend was not by, serving him as comrade in his good and evil adventures, retailing his wit, and weakening its effect. "*My morn-light*," Rivarol used to say.

In a *Letter of M. the President to M. the Count of*——, dated from the chateau of Crenset, Rivarol has displayed his talent in sharp and bitter criticism. He attacks the Abbé Delille, for his poem of

The Gardens. It is the only sensible critique of the time. While the *Mercur de France*, the *Almanach des Muses*, and other gazettes, with some literary pretensions, were blindly lavishing a thousand enthusiastic epithets on the lively abbé, ending by calling him *a second Virgil*, Rivarol, armed with his wit, pronounced an opinion which seemed very severe then, but is without appeal at the present day. He commences by defining these works, too much lauded in social circles and suppers, which the great day of publication despoils of all artifice and prestige.—“They are like spoilt children, passing from the hands of women to those of men.”—He reaches the action of the poem.—“In the first canto, the poet undertakes to control the water, the flowers, the shades; in the second, the flowers, the waters, the shades, and the turf; in the third and fourth, he still controls the shades, the flowers, the turf, and the waters.”—The critic afterward regrets that M. Delille should have neglected that sensibility of the ancients which so poetically animates the pictures of nature, that sweet and dreamy melancholy of the Germans, which diffuses an infinite charm, that richness of the English imagination, which colors all with freshness. Rivarol deplotes the mode of life of the bucolic poet.—“It is in solitude, that we penetrate the depths of Nature. M. Delille is a merry little abbé, prouder, perhaps, of his smart speeches than of his good verses; he cultivates solitude only in some fashionable by-street. It was in the fields that Virgil exclaimed, ‘*O ubi campi!*’ and M. the Abbé has never walked in the fields. There is, therefore, nothing in the poem of *The Gardens* which could be the work of a great master,

not a single pleasant reminiscence of the *Georgics*. M. the Abbé ought to have carried away from his intercourse with Virgil the luminous logic which enchains the thoughts, the beauties, and the episodes to the subject, the secret thread by which mind draws mind over its invisible course."

Rivarol was a great literary judge, but has not committed to writing his critical judgments any more than his happy sayings. He was contented with scattering them here and there over the world, according to the caprices of his fancy. Such words of his, however, had more of an echo than the long, dull, and pedantic arguments of Marmontel, or La Harpe. There is scarcely anything of Rivarol's, in written criticism, but his essay on Dante, which is still the best thing extant on this magnificent poet. I refer those curious in literature to it. There are still to be found, by diligent search, certain scattered notes on French or foreign poets.

In 1781, one evening in April, the wits, the philosophers, the great lords, and the great ladies, were strutting up and down the saloon of the Duchess de Coigny. On this evening, Rivarol, who was to read his journal, that is to say, talk right and left, kept them waiting longer than usual. As soon as he entered, a deep silence ensued. Everybody looked at, and listened with interest to this great man of genius, who rivalled the philosophers in reasoning, the fine ladies in grace, the wits in keenness, the great lords in dignity. He entered the saloon like a baron on his domains.

Almost as soon as he entered, while an air of Philidor was being played on the harpsichord, Rivarol re-

marked a young woman, whom he had already met, a pale English or German beauty, whose head bent in revery, would have made Ossian smile and weep. Rivarol, suddenly touched to the heart, was absorbed in the contemplation of this flower of sentiment; seeing her pass on the balcony, still more sad and meditating, he could not refrain from following her. He who was afraid of nothing, he who had never trembled, became pale and agitated; he was on the point of turning back; however, he relied on his readiness of wit, and went at all hazards, and leaned on the balustrade, within a step of the young lady. He wished to speak; he could find nothing to say; he had fallen in a few moments deeply in love with this stranger. Now Love is the least eloquent of all the gods. As he appeared to be studying the revolution of the planets, the young lady slowly left the balustrade, and re-entered the saloon, humming in a voice somewhat harsh the last notes of the song of Philidor.—“Why should I trouble myself about her?” muttered Rivarol; “she did not come here for me; this music reminds her of some fine bean; some Arctic passion, dipped in the waters of the icy sea.”

He, in his turn, re-entered the saloon, where a great void was already felt.—“Come, Monsieur de Rivarol,” said Madame de Coigny, “you, who make up the gazette of our times so well, tell us what is going on at the theatre and the government, at the Academy and at Versailles.”—“At the Academy,” said Rivarol, “Champfort has had his say, and has spoken like a book. It is a pity; I hoped better of Champfort at the Academy; he is nothing more than a sprig of lily, grafted on a poppy-head.”—

"Alas, the poor Academy!" said the Abbé de Rastignac; "Champfort was only wanting to its glory; that Academy which has not given a thought to Rousseau and Diderot."—"Rousseau and Diderot!" exclaimed Rivarol excited; "they would have disturbed the silence of the dead; for even they, in their writings, have stirring appeals and rhetorical action, after their fashion; they do not appear to be writing; they are always, as it were, at the tribune, the very reverse of many who have the appearance of writing when they speak."—"If there was an Academy of good talkers, M. de Rivarol would be its President," said the Abbé de Balivière. Rivarol bowed.—"Monsieur the Abbé de Balivière is like those people who are always going to sneeze; he is always going to be witty."—The abbé, thinking it was a compliment, bowed in his turn.—"Monsieur de Rivarol, I expect an epigraph from you to inscribe in my book on morals."—"You mean an epitaph," said Rivarol, with refined cruelty.—This time the abbé acknowledged himself beaten.—"Always jesting, always a wag," he murmured, as he disappeared in the crowd.—"But," said the fair stranger, with an English accent, "Monsieur de Rivarol can not fail to become a member of the Academy, for the wits assemble there."—"Ah, madame," said Rivarol, "I know that it is a decided advantage not to have done anything, but one should not abuse it."—"How, Monsieur de Rivarol! who, then, is more accomplished and witty than yourself? Your conversation is a book always open—"—"At the same page," said Rulhière, who had just arrived.—"Good evening, Rulhière," said Rivarol, a little nettled; "it is always your way of

announcing yourself; I am here; why should we put on gloves? In your criticism, the other day, you cuff'd me with the hand with which you were writing."—M. de Grimm was then announced.—“The devil!” said the Abbé de Rastignac, approaching Rivarol, “M. de Grimm appears to have given the citizen of Geneva a good dressing, in a letter to Madame Necker.”—“He must have taken great delight in writing that letter,” said Rivarol, “for little minds triumph over the faults of great geniuses, as owls enjoy an eclipse of the sun.”—“Take care!” said the Abbé de Rastignac, “M. de Grimm has great readiness of wit.”—“Pshaw! there is nothing so unready as readiness of wit.”—“What news is there, Monsieur de Grimm?” asked the Marchioness of St. Charmont, “what do they say at Versailles?”—“Nothing much,” said Grimm. “there’s the king’s joke on the Abbé Maury. The illustrious abbé has preached at Versailles, as everybody knows.”—“On what subject, on what text of Scripture?”—“Does the abbé ever think about Scripture? It was all profoundly political; he wanted to give the king some lessons in finance, and the administration of government. ‘It’s a pity,’ said his majesty, on leaving the church, ‘if the Abbé Maury had only talked to us a little about religion, he would have spoken of everything.’”—Rivarol resumed the conversation, and talked for nearly half an hour, in a philosophical and satirical vein on the ordinary topics of the day. Madame de Coigny having made a signal to him, he went to her.—“You do not know, chevalier, that that charming English lady whom you see down there is very much struck with your

person; she has come and asked me your address; I do not know why. Take care of yourself, the English are very queer sort of people."—"I will take care," said Rivarol, buried in his thoughts. He immediately resumed his former conversation in a loud voice: "The newest thing is a romantic little story, not at all known, which much resembles the amours of Crébillon the Gay. I will narrate it with fictitious names."

With these words, Rivarol cast an amorous glance on the pretty English lady. He resumed as follows: "It was in one of the three or four beautiful and fashionable saloons, where the mistress is more a queen than a marchioness. There were a great number of agreeable people, and among them a certain adventurer might be remarked, who was much admired, on account of his wit according to the women, for his shape according to some malicious men. On that evening, our adventurer, whom I will call if you like, the Chevalier de Saint Sorlin, was much less brilliant than usual. He scarcely got out four jokes in the space of two hours. What was the cause of this melancholy change? The chevalier was in love. Near one of the windows he had caught sight of a beautiful stranger of the most attractive charms. He approached her in the recess of the window, hoping to have an opportunity to speak to her at his ease. But how can a man talk when he is in love, especially when just surprised by love? However he managed matters so well that he attracted the attention of the handsome stranger. She condescended to lift her large blue English eyes and look at him. The next day, toward noon, as he

was pacing his chamber, and meditating on all the charms of those beautiful eyes, there was a ring at the door. The valet had gone out, so he went and opened it himself. What is it that he sees on the staircase? The beautiful English eyes. Like the tragedy heroes, he can hardly believe his eyes and ears. The lady was a romantic English woman. She had found our friend to her taste. She was a widow, and consequently free, and she came to offer him her liberty, her heart, her hand, and her income. 'In consideration of what?' asked the chevalier. 'Marriage,' replied the lady. 'Permit me to fall at your feet, and kiss your hands.'—'On one condition; the most beautiful woman in the world can only give what she has. Now when she has nothing in her heart but ennui, ennui is all she bestows. If I should be in that unfortunate condition, swear to me that we shall separate from one another for ever after the first quarter of an hour of ennui.'—'I swear to you!' A kiss ratified the oath. In a few days they are to be married. Meanwhile pray tell me, ladies, what you think of such a marriage? Will that couple love one another?"

Madame de Brancas answered thus: "Yes, certainly, like a great many others; but they will not live six weeks together; for, though they lived on ambrosia in Mahomet's paradise, they would have some quarters of an hour of ennui. Do not believe that two destinies will follow the same road in perpetual harmony! When the one would dream in the shade, the other will want to expand in the sunshine. From this or something else will come the first quarter of an hour of ennui. But after all we did not come into the

world merely to amuse ourselves. Is not that your opinion, my fair cousin? I think that the counsellor must be of the same opinion."

The next day, toward noon, a ring was heard at Rivarol's door. As he no longer kept his valet, he went and opened it himself, fancying that he recognised the step of his sister. He was not a little surprised to behold his pretty English woman of the previous evening. "It was no fiction then," said he, bowing. After a very graceful courtesy, the lady passed without ceremony into the antechamber. "No, monsieur," said she, "no, it is not a fiction. I am wearied; I do not know what to do with myself. You have taught me a very original mode of occupying my mind." — "Madame, I did not anticipate so much happiness: it was Heaven which inspired me. Do me the honor to walk into the parlor." Rivarol gently took the hand of the lady to conduct her. The lady allowed herself to be conducted, with a smile. "You do not know who I am. I will tell you in a word. I was left a widow after having been married two years to a poor Welsh baronet, who made somewhat of a hole in my fortune." — "And, in your heart," said Rivarol. — "Such damage is not irreparable." — "It is very cold in this parlor," replied Rivarol: "suppose we step into the bedroom." The lady raised her head proudly so as to dispense with a reply. "Your wishes shall be fulfilled in every respect, my lady. I engage myself from the present moment to be ever at your service." — "My fortune is slender." — "Mine is nothing at all. I live from hand to mouth, although like a lord. It is true that I always dine out; but that is a consideration

which amounts to nothing in a marriage contract.”—
“ You have what is better than fortune, wit and genius, which at the present day are almost equal to a throne.” — “ Yes, a throne whose every step is a breakneck one; but with you, my lady, a man would rise far beyond a throne.”

Three weeks afterward, Rivarol blindly married this romantic lady. She was a sort of a blue-stock-ing who came from London, where her face had gained her some success. She was not an English woman at all, but was born in the Vosges, at Remiremont. Rivarol, however, always called her *my lady*, so as not to let the world think that he had been deceived; for scarcely had he been married before he discovered that *my lady* was no other than a well-known adventuress who had taken him at his word, not well knowing what to do with herself. This counterfeit noble woman had succeeded, by dint of intrigue, in gaining admission to the soirées of Madame de Coigny. Rivarol himself never succeeded in learning her origin and adventures, but he soon knew too well that the little fortune of which she had spoken, with such a prudent air, was reduced to zero. You can easily imagine, that between Rivarol and my lady, the first quarter of an hour of enmity soon made its appearance. There was not even a honey-moon; the red moon soon displayed its ill-omened crescent over this ill-sorted marriage. In a letter dated in the first days of his marriage, Rivarol wrote to M. de Lauragnais: “ I have seen fit to slander Love, and he has sent me Hymen to avenge him.”

With my lady, evil days had come to Rivarol. He had never had money except accidentally, thanks

to play, love, or friendship. He had always lived at the expense of his neighbor. He had lived magnificently at the house of Madame de Polignac, at M. de Buffon's, at M. de Brancas', at the finest mansions in Paris, and the finest country-seats in the provinces. They disputed with each other the privilege of entertaining this singular man, who paid his reckoning with the small change of his wit. All his powerful friends thought themselves well paid. He was not one of those vulgar parasites who administer long draughts of flattery to their hosts. Rivarol always had great freedom of manner. He flattered no one. Before a lord he assumed the airs of a lord. He never shrank from the truth, however bitter it might be. Now, how was he to live, as he was no longer single? The noise caused by his marriage troubled him a great deal. He was pitied and less sought after. He attempted to make himself a home, where he would find consolation in labor; but he was lazy, and his wife violent.

After some matrimonial storms, Rivarol gradually returned to his old mode of life, and began to run about the world without troubling himself about his wife. My lady, whose anger was constantly increasing, fell sick. Her life was even in danger. Rivarol remained insensible, telling everybody that a woman so well pickled was sure to last until eighty. Wearied with continually hearing bitter complaints, he abandoned his home to follow Manette, another adventuress of easy access, whom he unceremoniously made his mistress. He was, however, cruelly punished for his base abandonment of one whom he had taken under his protection. One

fine morning he read in the Journal that the French Academy had just decreed the prize of virtue to the servant-maid of M. de Rivarol, for having nursed and taken care of Madame Rivarol, who had been abandoned by her husband. That was enough to crush for ever a man of feeling. Rivarol was only a man of wit — he carelessly laughed it off.

He was soon pardoned in a world where virtue was no longer a title of nobility. He found another home with Manette, whose laughing prattle sometimes charmed him. This second retreat was not free from storms. Manette had travelled a great deal. She had left the marks of her light footstep in Italy and England. A woman who travels lets her heart travel too. Rivarol was jealous and fickle. It often happened, according to Garat, that he took his gentle mistress by the hair of her head, with a most gentle intention of pitching her out of the window; but he recollected himself in time. Manette was an amiable copy of Manon Lescaut, who had come from her province, ignorant and poor, but very pretty. She had understanding, but especially the understanding of love; besides she had studied at the school of Sophie Arnould. May I not insert this charming epistle to Manette? —

O thou, Manette, O thou! to whom all books are sealed,
 Who never yet hast read two words in one of mine;
 To whom e'en prose and verse have never been revealed,
 Who knowest not if ink and paper do combine
 The causes both of good and ill —
 If other poppies blow, and other laurels twine,
 Than those with care the gardeners till;
 Who knowest not a quill when parted from its goose;
 Who often tendered me, some knotty point to loose,

Your scissors; or some scraps of thread, with dext'rous skill
 My odds and ends of chat to patch and stitch together;
 Ah, keep for me, I pray, this ignorance for ever,
 Those nothings that your head doth fill.
 If aught should make you grow more wise,
 To you small gain from it would rise,
 While all my happiness you'd kill.
 Have ever taste for me, such as in fruit we prize,
 And spirit we from rose distil.

In his great *Discourse on the Universality of the French Language*, Rivarol, then actually Count de Rivarol, showed himself a truly profound grammarian. Despite all the jealousy of the journalists who wrote, against the journalist who talked, there was but one cry of admiration throughout the gazettes, there were, however, for all that, as usual, bitter criticisms, like that of Garat. This *discourse* is a noble monument for our tongue. It is the work of a sagacious, reasonable, and original mind, rejecting with disdain the old frippery of the common places of rhetoric and philosophy. He runs over the history of languages without stopping too long at the writers of ponderous tomes, like Vosius, Bochart, Brigant, Gebelin, who wrote to be read by no mortal man. The learned and the superficial may follow Rivarol with the same ease. He guides us through the labyrinth with a better clew than Ariadne's, that of his bold and luminous intellect.

He ended by taking a great liking to the philosophical study of languages. It is known that Leibnitz wished that the people of the world were divided according to their languages. He was even desirous of making a geographical chart on this plan. Rivarol, thinking the idea an ingenious one, said that

he would undertake Leibnitz's chart, provided that he was imprisoned in Mahomet's paradise, without women, and guarantied the life of a patriarch. Even in a paradise of Mahomet, Rivarol could not have resigned himself to the laborious scrapings of the pen: he would rather have talked to himself. Such indolence is to be deplored when we reflect that this intellect, eager to talk on every subject, and to talk well, had a far-reaching horizon in the regions of philosophy. A little good resolution, pen in hand, he might, perhaps, who knows, have arrived at the knowledge of the primitive language, and the derivation of all the secondary dialects, which are spoken throughout the globe. How much would he not have left besides in all departments? For it was only by caprice that he wished to shine as a linguist. He was especially poet and philosopher: he talked politics like a great statesman. To express in a word how much his intellect was prized, I will recall the remark of the Duke de Brancas, who when solicited to subscribe to a new edition of the *Encyclopedia*, replied, "The *Encyclopedia*! of what use is it since Rivarol visits me?"

This *Discourse on the Universality of the French Language*, obtained the prize of the Berlin Academy. Frederic ordered his academy to receive Rivarol. He wrote to him himself a very laudatory letter. Rivarol replied in verse, he could not do less. It is in this epistle that these pretty lines are found:—

For me—of Nature the abandoned child,
Nursed by the hands of indolence and ease,
Unnerved by pleasure—it must be my doom
To find at once oblivion in the tomb.

Notwithstanding his serious writings on language, morals, and politics, Rivarol did not abandon the sceptre of wit. He always scattered with open hands his sparkling showers. He incessantly pursued his friends and his enemies with his piquant satires. One day, at the Palais Royal, he saw Florian pass before him, with a manuscript sticking half out of his coat-pocket. "Ah, Monsieur de Florian," he cried to him, with his mocking smile; "if you were not known, how you would be robbed!" About the same time he dined at Madame de Polignac's, where, while they were expecting some witty remark, he blurted out some gross stupidity in order to see how the guests would look. There was a general exclamation: "That is just the way. I can not say anything stupid without some one's crying out, 'Stop thief!'"

For some years still, Rivarol continued to be the most redoubtable pamphleteer, whether he wrote or spoke. His father having died, he summoned to him a brother and two of his sisters, gave them titles according to his custom, spent his last crown on their toilettes, and brought them out in the fashionable world, where they found, without having to wait too long, suitors in marriage. This was what Rivarol expected. The brother also made his way well. He became major-general. Rivarol said of him: "He would have been the wit of any other family, he was the fool of ours."

As the Revolution approached, he might have had a fine career by making himself the pamphleteer of the people. This he disliked doing. He despised, says a biographer, the politics of the street and of the

tavern. He took up the defence of all that blind nobility, who had been his companions in pleasure. It must be admitted that M. de Maurepas had already paid him royally at so much for every word and every line. It must be admitted that Queen Marie-Antoinette, who sought arms and orators to support the tottering throne, had summoned Rivarol to Versailles. Accordingly, on his return from the palace, Rivarol, without losing time, wrote against Mirabeau, and thundered violently against "this chimerical equality, which over-excited brains wanted to establish in the finest country of Europe. While lulling the people to sleep with tales of the golden age, you rivet their chains more firmly for the future. You give them the rage of the lion, without arming them with his strength. Absolute equality between men will always be a mystery of the philosophers. The church constantly builds up, but the maxims of the innovators tend only to destruction—they will ruin the rich without enriching the poor. Instead of the equality of property, we shall soon have only the equality of misery." In order to describe Mirabeau in a word, he said: "This Mirabeau is capable of anything for money, even of a good action."

The Duke of Orleans despatched the Duke de Biron, to gain him to his cause. He refused. The king himself had recourse to Rivarol. One morning, M. de Malesherbes was announced. Rivarol rose respectfully. "I come," said the ex-minister, "in behalf of the king, to propose to you an interview with his majesty, for nine o'clock this evening. The king, filled with esteem for your talents, has thought that considering the difficult circumstances in which

the state is placed, he might claim them.”—“Monsieur,” answered Rivarol, “the king has had perhaps already but too many counsels. I have but one to give him: If he wishes to reign, *it is time that he should act the king: otherwise he will be no longer king.*”

As we see, Rivarol preserved his freedom of speech. He did not consider himself obliged to anybody, even to the king. He was punctual to the appointment. “Sire,” said he to this king, who only knew how to listen; “pardon me if I venture to speak the truth.” And after this preamble, Rivarol looked around him, as if truth had been ill at ease before the throne of Louis XVI. “The state is beggared, sire, there is its weak side. M. Necker is a charlatan: his report is a trap to gain confidence, without anything resulting for the good of the state. The notables are called together, plenty of ciphers for a case of simple subtraction. Rely on it, sire, when one wishes to prevent the horrors of a revolution, one must desire and carry out a revolution himself. The parliaments and the philosophers have commenced the mischief, especially the parliaments; they formed by an esprit de corps a barrier of selfishness, which almost always opposed the royal power. If I had been king of France, I should not have exiled these members of parliament, but should have had them taken to Clarenton, where they would have been treated like lunatics. It is better, when one is condemned to command a great people to commit an apparent injustice, than to see the sceptre of power broken in one’s hands. Weakness is worse for a king than the tyranny which maintains order. For you, sire, there remains for you yet to—*act the king.*”

The king did not understand a word of this discourse. He dismissed Rivarol, and declared that he would consider it. Rivarol pushed farther and farther into the arena, became more and more ardent in the struggle; he let loose all his wrath and all his wit on the Orleans faction. He was soon informed that there was a great deal of talk at the club *des cordeliers* of stringing him *à la lanterne*. He did not care to brave the danger, but departed quietly for the chateau de Manicamp, where his old friend the Count de Lauraguais had already taken refuge. It was a noisy solitude, full of lackeys and equipages. Hence Rivarol continued his pamphlets, the *Acts of the Apostles*, with Champeenetz, his *Theory of Political Bodies*, his *National Journal*, Solomon of Cambray. It is also at this time that his history of General La Fayette dates, whom he calls General Morpheus. The celebrated Burke, somewhat later, reading these political writings of Rivarol, exclaimed, with enthusiasm, that they would one day be placed along side of the annals of Tacitus.*

* The Baron de Théis, who had often seen Rivarol in 1791, at Manicamp, has been kind enough to note down his reminiscences for me. I shall reproduce but this one from all these precious notes, which well display Rivarol's manner about that time. "His address inspired confidence. He disseminated about him an atmosphere of happiness and philosophy. He had an open countenance, a sonorous voice. His conversation was brilliant, and rapid as lightning. If the conversation became serious, this same man, so remarkable for his lovely sallies, suddenly became an eloquent orator, but always sensible: then returning to his habitual disposition, and as if he repented of having talked sense too long a time, he ended with some brilliant witticism. "M. de Théis has still fresh in his memory the personal appearance of Rivarol. "He was tall and comely, had a noble manner, fine features, an eagle glance, a delicate and smiling

Meanwhile Rivarol, fearing to be discovered by the sans-culottes of the revolutionary inquisition, resolved to expatriate himself, like so many others. He summoned Manette to him, and departed for Flanders in her joyous company. At Brussels he wrote again in defence of the king, who had just been imprisoned. From Brussels he went to London, where he left Manette; from London to Hamburgh, where he remained some years. He was much sought after by foreigners, by emigrants, and by the small number of the learned who chanced to meet there. While there he wrote for the *Spectateur du Nord*, but as usual, parsimoniously. The lines which follow will give you a just idea of the voluptuous *farniente* that had seized Rivarol: "Indolent to excess, Rivarol had already passed the period when his dictionary was to have been finished, without having a single article in it ready. Fauch, a printer, at Hamburgh, took him to his house, lodged him there, shut him in, put sentinels at his door, and forbade entrance to the *listeners* with whom Rivarol liked to surround himself; in a word, he forced him to write. Rivarol, a prisoner, supplied matter slowly, but furnished, at last, to Fauch's workmen three or four pages a-day, by drawing upon a large stock of thoughts scattered in his portfolio, or

mouth; and to crown all a fine brown head of hair. He had the best hair of any man of his time. He showed original elegance in his dress, although it was always simple." M. de Théis saw a very beautiful woman at Maricamp, who had come privately to see Rivarol. He was not able to discover whether or no it was Madame Rivarol. The journalist loved mystery in everything, he opened to no one the vast volume of his private life. He had a reason for this, for it was one of the scandalous volumes of his epoch fertile in scandal. M. de Théis also saw the son of Rivarol, who was called Raphael, and was as beautiful as Raphael must have been at ten years of age.

rather, in little ticketed bags, where it was his custom to throw them. Thus was Rivarol delivered, at the end of three months, of his preliminary discourse."

I will also copy the conclusion of a letter of Rivarol's, touching his indolence at Hamburgh: "It is in vain for my laziness to plead its ancient privileges. I treat it like an old acquaintance. I work as much as I can, but never as much as I would wish to. A tarantula, named Fanch, as sharp after a page of text as a dog after the quarry, is continually on my scent. My friend, one must make his track of sadness in this lower world, in order to have some claim in the other. I have, I think, marked my own sufficiently deep."*

From Hamburgh, Rivarol went to Berlin, where he resolved to live until the end of what he called the saturnalia of French liberty. He was received by the king of Prussia better than a Condé or a Montmorency would have been. He found at Berlin, as at Paris, a brilliant auditory to hear him talk politics or the belles-lettres. He even found friends, which had not been his fortune at Paris. Among others, he cited the ambassador of Sweden and M. Guahiera. He made his peace with Delille, and some other exiles, whom he had formerly bitten to the quick

* One of Rivarol's sisters, given by him in marriage to the Baron d'Angel, was the mistress of Dumouriez; she had followed this general in his exile, to partake with faithful love his evil fortunes. She often wrote to her brother: "Draw Dumouriez from his tomb; by what he has done, we may judge what he will do," she repeated incessantly. Rivarol, importuned, wrote to his sister; "Opinion killed Dumouriez when he quitted France. Tell him, therefore, as a friend, to act the part of a dead man; it is the only one which it suits him to play; the more he writes that he lives, the more obstinately will they believe him to be dead."

in his satires; but his most delightful friendship at Berlin was that with the Princess Olgorouska, who loved the sciences, scholars, and poets. The princess was still young, pretty enough. She lavished her fortune royally like a Russian princess. It will be readily understood that Rivarol found this mode of living in excellent taste. "One can at least console one's self," he wrote to Paris, "for being far from one's country, and above all from one's wife." It was quite ten years since he had heard the latter spoken of. It must be admitted he was never the first to broach the subject. His son was in the service of Denmark.

He was attacked mortally on the 5th of April, 1801, some say by a violent fever, others by an inflammation of the chest. He was only sick seven days. All that was illustrious in Berlin, at court and in city, showed their friendship and devotion. He was sensible to the last moment, and died like an ancient philosopher, surrounded by friends and flowers. His death has been differently related. According to Sulpice de la Platière, he died fully impressed with the truth of the immortality of the soul, never losing his serenity, accustoming himself to the idea of death surrounded by the flowers of spring, having a parterre of roses in sight, and at last expiring with these solemn words: "My friends, behold the great shadow approaches, these roses are about to change to poppies: it is time to contemplate eternity."

According to the editor of his works, he died like a sage of Greece. The eve of his death, foreboding his approaching end, he had himself taken to the country-seat of the Princess Olgorouska. He was

desirous that his chamber should be strewn with flowers, his bed drawn to the window whence he could see a garden and a brook. "Here I am," he said, "between the four elements," alluding to the brook, the garden of roses, the air which caressed his burning forehead, the love of the princess. During the evening he had moments of delirium, demanding Attic figs and nectar. The princess wished to take his hand, he was dead.

Finally, according to Madame de Rivarol, who saw fit to write about him after twenty years of absence, he died in a very prosaic manner, uttering *furious cries, which were heard during three days from one end of the city of Berlin to the other*. I would push gallantry very far in order to give credence to an account by a woman, if it was not Madame de Rivarol writing about her husband.

What is beyond doubt, is that Rivarol died young, leaving behind him only the fragments scattered here and there of a splendid work. His ideas have left traces of their passage, his style is of the grand school, by turns pompous and energetic, always original, not avoiding enough the play of words and jingle of sentences. But what will live above all of this man, who only showed what he could have done, is his pure and simple wit, the tradition of his sharp and genial eloquence. In a word, Rivarol will live in political and literary history because he was the finest talker of the eighteenth century.

THE CHEVALIER DE LA CLOS.

FANCY to yourself, in 1760, at the time when Sophia Arnould made her débüt at the opera, under the reign of Madame de Pompadour, a young man, grown pale from dreams of heroic glory, studying the actions of the most illustrious captains, already renowned for his bravery, because he had fought in a duel, in despair of displaying himself on another field of battle; by turns proud and happy to feel in his grasp the hilt of a sword, to discover in books the science of war.

Now behold another portrait:—A chevalier of 1766, representative of the roués of the Regency. We are at the opera, at the début of Mademoiselle Beaumesnil. A pastoral is represented. Our chevalier is in a box, in fair and good company. They call him *zevalier*: he applauds the actress, and exclaims *adouble!* He disappears from the box, to go and offer his congratulations to the débutante. On approaching, he repeats to her some impertinent verses. Mademoiselle Beaumesnil, in her delight, promises to receive him at her private levée. He returns to the box, where his long absence is already

a cause of complaint. In that box there is a lady of forty, and a young girl just entering on life.

Do you see, in a room in furnished lodgings, at Grenoble, about 1779, a man who is already gray, although still young? He is seated at a little table, where he is writing rapidly, sometimes interrogating his memory, sometimes turning over *Clarissa Harlowe*, the *Religieuse*, and the *Nouvelle Héloïse*. It is midnight; a small lamp throws its faint light upon him. A malicious smile passes now and then over his lips. Lavater would have said that this man, who is writing a satire in the style of Petronius, is taking vengeance. It is a satire on the world in which he has lived, on the world which has opened its heart to him. Why should he seek revenge? From caprice; because he has discovered that at the bottom of the cup was poison; because, dwelling in the hearts of women, he found the hell that was there concealed. But, believe it, he sought vengeance, because, as a poet has said, he felt the shores of youth gliding away.

'89 has struck, like the funeral knell of the eighteenth century. Let us follow this man, who is beginning to be old; but who, by his actions, wishes to persuade himself that he is still young. Let us follow him, step by step. Do you see him, at first, in those noisy orgies of the Palais Royal, seated at the right of the prince, whose councillor he is.—“Liberty! republic!” cry all these men of wit after supper, who fancy themselves proud Romans; “Liberty! republic!”—The cry issues from the Palais Royal, like a cannon-ball, against the palace of the Tuileries. Follow the most excited of them all. Behold him drawing

up with Brissot the famous petition of the Champ de Mars, calling for the trial of Louis XVI. That is not all; he makes himself the orator of the street, like Camille Desmoulins, on the day of the taking of the Bastille; he draws in his train all the passions of the mob. A moment ago, he demanded the trial of the king; it is the head of Louis XVI. that he now demands. The orators of the clubs are jealous of the orator of the street, they imprison him to rid themselves from his furious ambition. Is it over?

No; on the fifth of October, 1803, do you see that man at Tarento who is dying, worn out by every passion, good and evil? On the previous night he had still fought. Grateful France will not, perhaps, inscribe his name on a triumphal arch; but will she forget that the general of artillery, Chanterlos de la Clos, author of the *Liaisons Dangereuses*, fought heroically for her, on the Rhine and in Italy?

Thus is this life of La Clos a varied picture, by turns, as we have seen, a stern soldier, caring only for his sword; a gallant chevalier, frequenting gay society and the idle scenes, a writer of satire and scandal; an impassioned orator; at last, a great captain; and yet in this introductory sketch, we have only pointed out the principal outlines. Let us examine more closely this complex figure.

Apart from a very brilliant paradox, by the author of *Barnabe*, we find no literary mention of La Clos. It seems as if the future was desirous of forgetting this name, which it would be unjust to bury in the *Liaisons Dangereuses*. This romance may be nothing more than a curious monument of a period which has disappeared; but has not La Clos raised himself

from this sad monument by his learned investigations on artillery, and, above all by his glorious campaigns? La Clos is unknown to the new generation; and this ignorance does them honor; none but a few scholars and men curious in literature hunt up his romance. I have not been able to discover an engraved portrait of him. The king had, at Eu or Neuilly, a fine portrait of La Clos; only one other exists, a crayon sketch, in three tints, drawn by Carmontel, during an evening at the Palais Royal. It is a full-length portrait, which I have been permitted to see, as a priceless curiosity. La Clos is seated near a backgammon-table, leaning on his elbow, and thoughtful, but it is not the game which occupies him. His face bears the impress of about forty-five. It is a countenance more intelligent than beautiful; the lines are strong, but a little sharp. That which first strikes the eye is a prominent forehead, a scrutinizing eye, an expression philosophical to excess, betraying neither warmth of soul nor good nature. He, perhaps, committed the grave fault of being profoundly conscious that his portrait was being taken, a general failing, and from which men of wit are not exempt. During this eighteenth century, when no one believed in anything, their very name, the name of their father, the most noble part of their heritage, was no longer a sacred thing. In that very literature in which titles were so cleverly ridiculed, the writers emulously assumed names having an air of nobility. In all ages, men have taken pleasure in inconsistency. Fontenelle and Crébillon set the example; it is well known that their real names were Le Bouvier and Jollyot. A nobility of the pen was then seen to dawn. Some

sincere men, some frank natures, not having entirely lost their family pride, as Piron, Diderot, Gilbert, were content to make their names simple as they were illustrious; but how many others have made illustrious a name not borne by their fathers! You would be surprised if I should make a catalogue of all the names, thrown aside like old garments that did not fit the figure. Thus, you know Poquelin and Arouet, but do you know M. de Bouvier, M. Carlet, M. Paradis, M. Pinot, M. Carton, M. Claris, M. Pierres, M. Jollyot, M. Caron, M. Néricault? At the last day, the destroying angel, not having inscribed these writers under their true names, will himself have much trouble in recognising Fontenelle, Marivaux, Monterif, Duclos, Dancourt, Florian, Bernis, Crébillon, Beaumarchais, Destouches.

The wit and the general, my present subject, was called neither more nor less than Chauderlos. How could one make such a name illustrious by anything short of conquering the world, or discovering another? The *Iliad*, and all the other epic poems, could never have transmitted so unfortunate a name to posterity. If Bonaparte had been called Chauderlos, St. Helena, that poetic symbol of all modern glory, would not fill all the avenues of the nineteenth century.

Chauderlos did not wish to undertake to make his father's name illustrious. His mother was a Demoiselle La Clos; he found it more simple and more convenient to call himself de la Clos, and even the Chevalier de la Clos; he did so, and nobody complained.

Pierre Ambroise Chauderlos, Chevalier de la Clos, was born at Amiens in 1744, and died at Tarento, in 1803. Thus he passed through all the

pleasures the follies, and the grandeurs, of the most curious half-century in the history of France. His father, a gentleman, or small proprietor, of Picardy, designed him for a soldier; La Clos entered, as a candidate, the corps of engineers, where he was appointed a sub-lieutenant, at eighteen. He made his finest campaigns in the hotels of 1760, from the ante-chamber to the oratory.

A man of noble stature, expressive countenance, very gallant figure, accustomed at an early age to the manners of good society, and theatrical intrigues, handling well his sword and pen, bold even to impertinence, witty even to satire, he passed in the gayest manner through the world, from conquest to conquest.

He tried the vanities of literature. He made his début in poetry, like Rivarol and Rulhière, by a fanciful epistle to a fashionable young woman. His *Epistle to Margot* is equal to Voltaire's minor poems, for its ease and wit. Widely known in the theatrical world, he availed himself of this advantage to produce a comic opera. He had been led into this easy style of composition by an American, then in fashion, M. de St. George, who rested himself from his duels by composing music. It has not been forgotten, that this music was more ingenious than learned, displaying more sprightliness than character. La Clos had read many romances: he borrowed the subject and title of his opera from a romance of Madame Riccoboni, *Ernestine*. It will be remarked that La Clos did not display much invention. During the representation (I do not say the first, for there were not two), La Clos and St. George, like good fellows who

are ready for anything, walked up and down, behind the scenes, pulling the actresses' bouquets to pieces, and promising them a good supper if the piece failed. Doubtless, they wanted to sup, but they did not expect to be taken at their word. Never was comic opera more merrily hissed by the pit: toward the middle of the piece, the whole audience attempted variations, which prognosticated the destiny of *Ernestine*. The piece was saluted at the fall of the curtain by a chorus of hisses.—“If we had not already beaten one another,” said the poet to the musician, “I could find great pleasure in cutting your throat.”—“And why mine?” said the furious American, who had not the courage to jest over his defeat; “for you must acknowledge that it was your words which lost all.”—“Truly! Do you imagine that they listened to the words? The music was quite sufficient!”

The two collaborators had assumed a sort of humorously-menacing attitude, when the pretty Mademoiselle Olympia, who played the part of Ernestine, threw herself between them in alarm.—“I am lost!” she exclaimed despairingly; “’tis the second time this week I have been hissed.”—“Do not grieve,” said La Clos; “with such eyes as yours, you can always recover yourself. Come and sup with me.”—“With me!” said St. George, seizing the actress.—“With neither of you,” said she, repelling the musician; “I do not want to hear anything more of you; a man who has made me sing, *ta ti ta ta ti*—that’s worth the trouble of singing, truly!”—“You are right,” said La Clos; “it is superannuated music, unworthy of so sweet a mouth. You would have done better to have spoken my words without singing

them."—"Ah, I advise you to talk in that style. You have forgotten, then, how I was received when I sang—

Wine is the cause of love,
And love the cause of drink.

Saying these words, Olympia ran off and disappeared in the recesses of the park of painted paper. While La Clos pursued her, St. George sought the other actors of the piece. Not one of them would sup in his company, so desperate had been the failure. It might have been called a field of battle, where the vanquished thinks only of retreat. In vain did the authors pursue the actors as far as their dressing-rooms, they could not find one to sup with them. As they met again at the door of the theatre, they looked at one another, with a peal of laughter: "Shall we not sup?" said La Clos.

St. George took his arm and led him to the *Café de la Régence*. They entered with elevated heads like conquerors. As they passed haughtily by a group of chess-players, they jostled a spectator who, in preserving his balance, pushed his neighbor on the chessmen. It was Jean-Jacques Rousseau who turned round furiously: "You intend to insult me?" said he, pale and gloomy, fancying that he saw his imaginary enemies; for at that time, like Pascal, he saw everywhere an abyss, or rather death. "Corbleu, monsieur," said La Clos, who did not know the face of the celebrated philosopher of Geneva, "do you know who I am?" Everybody turned toward La Clos, with a movement of lively and respectful curiosity, the players themselves

raised their heads — “Know that you must not speak to me without respect, for I am an unsuccessful author.”

Grimm, alluding to this opera, says, that the genius of Pergolese could not have sustained such words. Bachaumont is not more favorable. “The author has prudently remained incognito; excellent music would have lost all its value, adapted to this flat and detestable opera.”

La Clos was not desirous of trying the chances of the stage a second time. He cast himself still deeper into the follies of the age, passing from the side scenes to the boudoir, from the boudoir to the wine-shop.

However, in this fine time they were no longer content with seduction — the reign of Richelieu began to wane, Jean-Jacques had arrived. A thousand idlers around him echoed his words. Every one was anxious to preach in his turn. There was preaching everywhere except in the church, everywhere in fashionable circles, in boudoirs, even in bed-chambers. More than one philosopher of the side-scenes wrote his pamphlets against the manners of the age on the knees of an actress. La Clos wanted to be heard. He had raised the veil of the passions of society at the saddest hour, as Diderot had raised the veil of those of the convent. He mended his pen, and without pity for the society which had nursed him softly on its guilty breast, illuminated its features with a horrid glare by writing the *Divisions Dangereuses*. Crébillon the Gay, who saw everything in a laughing mood, had written of the same society; but his books were a deceptive mirror, cov-

ered with roses and gauze, which reflected only agreeable scandals. In place of these pretty patches of color, suddenly appears a painter without tinsel, who treads under foot the gauze and roses to reproduce the truth in all its nakedness. At first glance, however, have we not still the heroes and heroines of Crébillon: there is the same smile and the same grace, silk and velvet, gold and flowers—nothing is wanting. But look closer. Do you not see the heart which struggles and contends with evil? Society went every evening, after supper, a step toward ruin. It had been playful in its vices, it had committed, laughingly, as in a freak, crimes prettily-colored and perfumed; it ended, from being a gay sinner, with becoming seriously criminal, for the sole pleasure of committing crime. It was then that La Clos seized it for his picture. Seeing itself in this gloomy picture, society became frightened at it. However, will it be believed? Far from covering its head with ashes, it took pleasure in gazing on the features the painter had reproduced in all the horrible truth which issues from an impure fountain.

The novel of La Clos was read, therefore, with avidity and with terror. Everybody wished to see the man who wrote thus. Far from shutting the door on him, they invited him to enter. La Clos had said to every one, "I know you under your mask." And all, seeing a man who knew all secrets so well, flattered him in fear lest he might speak too loud without disguising the names.

The success of the book was prodigious, especially in the saloons. It even formed a literary epoch, for

the most difficult critics, Grimm for example, admitted from the first, that it required a vast and diversified talent to write such a book. The novel appeared under this title: "*Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, or Letters collected in Society, and published for the benefit of others, by M. C. de L——;" with this motto: "I have seen the manners of my time, and I have published these letters." Grimm thus announced this book to the sovereigns of the north: "There has not been a work, not even excepting those of Crébillon, in which the disorder of principles and manners of what is called good society, and which we can scarcely after all avoid calling so, has been described with more truth, boldness, and wit. No one will, therefore, be astonished at all the ill that the women feel obliged to say against it. However great the pleasure which the perusal has given them, it has not been without some degree of chagrin. How can a man pass for anything else than a monster, who knows their secret so well and keeps it so badly? However, while they detest, they fear, admire, and fête him; the man of the day and his historian, the model and the painter, are treated almost in the same manner. Whatever bad opinion we may have of Parisian society, we would find, I imagine, very few intrigues as dangerous for a young person as the perusal of the *Liaisons Dangereuses*."

We will refrain from recalling the scenes of this novel, much better calculated to deprave than to reform its readers; but we recognise in it an energetic painter, more occupied with the outline, idea, and character, than the color. We can not too much admire the naïveté and even the stupidity of Cécile

Volanges. A man of mediocere talent has never dared to portray a stupid woman. There are such ; Cécile Volanges forms the happiest contrast to Madame de Mertenil who is the demon of wit. Another, not less happy contrast, is the romantic virtue of Madame de Tourvel, opposed to the fine vices of the Viscount de Valmont.

La Clos is not entirely the author of his book. Without *Clarissa Harlowe*, the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, and the *Religieuse*, who knows whether he would have written this novel, many of the pages of which are merely echoes? We perceive Richardson, Jean-Jacques, and Diderot, in the *Liaisons Dangereuses*. La Clos was not endowed with that creative genius, which inspires an original work without foreign aid. La Clos was a man of wit, who could see the world at the moment Truth diffused her light. After having seen, he wished to paint, but scarcely knowing how to sketch, he took the pencil of the English romance-writer, the palette of Diderot, and the brush of Jean-Jacques. Influenced by truth, indignation, or the love of notoriety and scandal, guided by these illustrious masters, he succeeded in producing a living work. For the back-ground, we discover at once that La Clos has contented himself with transporting the characters of *Clarissa Harlowe* to Paris. He has darkened them, and that is his secret. His true merit is to have framed them after the manner of the time. As regards the form, we at once recognise the passionate, flowing, energetic expression of the *Nouvelle Héloïse*. As for the color and the truth they are derived the *Religieuse*. This remark of Grimm paints La Clos in vivid colors : “ If Rétif de la Bretonne

is the Rousseau of the gutter, Chauderlos de la Clos is the Rétif de la Bretonne of good society.*

In 1782, when he published the *Liaisons Dangereuses*, La Clos was, doubtless, married. On this point particularly, details are entirely wanting. Michaud, in his dictionary, which it would be useful to supersede, contents himself with saying: "A good son, a good father, a good husband." What became of his children?

In 1786, we find Chauderlos de la Clos a warrior, a serious writer, endeavoring to cast into oblivion the *Liaisons Dangereuses* by a paper before the French Academy, which had proposed a eulogy on Vauban as the subject for the prize in eloquence for that year. At that time, La Clos no longer read Richardson, but Polybius. His paper has this motto: "Endeavor to make your discourse useful rather than brilliant." La Clos is very far from being the eulogist of Vauban. He admits that the illustrious marshal originated the art of properly attacking a place, but he condemns him for having passed all his life in fortifying without discovering the art of fortification. He accuses him (the accusation has been refuted in the *Journal des Savants*) of having sunk fourteen hundred and forty millions with terrible prodigality, "to build up with one hand the fortresses which he so readily threw down with the other. Who could praise him, after having cost France more than half

* While writing this, a contemporary of La Clos, the same who has already given me a sight of the author of the *Liaisons Dangereuses*, in the drawing of Carmontel, assures me that all the characters of this romance are portraits from life. The incidents took place at Grenoble, as La Clos has related them, with the exception of a few episodes which may be reminiscences of the youth of the novelist.

of the present national debt, and leaving a portion of her frontiers exposed? The system of M. de Vauban is no more than a system of bastions, known at the end of the fifteenth century, and regularly embodied as early as 1567 in the citadel of Antwerp." When he wrote this memoir, still worthy of being consulted,* La Clos was at La Rochelle, where there was doubtless an academy; for the memoir is signed, Chauderlos de la Clos, of the Academy of La Rochelle.

In 1787, La Clos again became a poet, of which he gave evidence by a lively whimsicality on Orosmanes, in reference to the tragedy of Voltaire. We regret that we have not been able in spite of all our researches, to discover the collection of La Clos's poems, in which the man must, doubtless, here and there, appear beneath the poet.

Up to 1789, La Clos lived always a gallant and a satirist, always loved and sought after in the fashionable world which he had described. During the earlier storms of the Revolution, he raised his head, and once again turned against this poor society, to which he owed the splendor of his youth. He became intimate with the Duke of Orleans, the misguided prince who evoked the tempest, and who died without fear. He wrote politics in violent newspapers, among others in the *Journal of the Friends of the Constitution*.† He always went straight forward, without fear and without regret. He drew up

* Carnot, the member of the convention, published observations on this memoir.

† Journal of the Jacobins, at a later date Journal of the Friends or rather the enemies, of the Constitution.

with Brissot the petition of the Champ de Mars, which called for the sentence of Louis XVI. On that day the orator harangued the rabble, and attracted to him all the passions of the streets. Will it be believed? This success with the mob turned the head of him who had shone at his ease in gilded saloons, among silk gowns and brodered coats. He placed his eloquence at the service of the clubs, and wherever he saw the people assembled he turned orator, and poured forth bitter sarcasms against the nobility.

After having made his mark in July, 1789, at the club of Montrouge, which was the club of the Orleanist nobles or Encyclopædists, La Clos showed himself very powerful by his eloquence and boldness at the club of the Feuillants, at the Palais Royal, at the Hill of the Mills.

The political career of La Clos commenced therefore with the first movements of the Revolution. He had lived for several years in intimate familiarity with the Duke of Orleans, who appreciated the resources of the military genius of the captain of artillery, as well as the philosophical and satirical wit of the novelist. We can not say whether La Clos, who was a reckless revolutionist, labored for liberty or for the Duke of Orleans; perhaps he labored for both. It is beyond doubt that he displayed up to the death of the king, in the clubs, the journals, and on the field of battle, the boldness inculcated by Danton.

He had ended by withdrawing from the tempest, wishing to breathe in freedom "far from the saturnalia of liberty." But as soon as the country was declared in danger he resumed service. He

was appointed colonel of artillery under the old General Luckner. We may accord La Clos the entire glory of the campaign, for the general allowed himself to be governed by his colonel.

However, as it was desirable to get rid of a man as dangerous for his genius as his boldness, he was on his return from the campaign, appointed governor of the French establishments in India. But how could he lose sight of the great drama in which he played a part? He chose to remain on the stage.

After the 5th and 6th of October, he went over to England with the Duke of Orleans. He returned to France only to be imprisoned. His military genius consoled him in prison. He sent Robespierre some suggestions on political reform, which the too celebrated orator embodied in his own speeches. La Clos obtained liberty to go to La Fère, to make trial of a new species of projectile, which was, according to him, more terrible than a thunderbolt. The trial succeeded as he wished, and surprised all the officers present. But at Paris they thought him a dangerous man, and sent him back to prison. His project was abandoned, and, as an historian remarks, "is among the number of forgotten inventions, which will return to us some day from abroad."

Much astonishment has been expressed, that La Clos should have escaped the fate of the Duke of Orleans, since he was arrested as an Orleanist. Biographers, who were his contemporaries, declare, that he owed his safety only to his talent and address. If Rabbe, and some accounts of the time, are to be believed, La Clos was the author of Robespierre's speeches. This is a point of history which can not

be discussed here. We have scarcely formed an opinion; we shall, therefore, take care not to express any on either side. We have, however, had the curiosity to study the style of La Clos in the *Journal of the Friends of the Constitution*, in the *Gallery of the States-General*, where we recognise him between Mirabeau and Rivarol, his fellow-laborers. We have re-read Robespierre's speeches, and, why should we not speak out? Robespierre appears to us to be wholly comprised in La Clos. It must not be forgotten that in three or four important speeches, Robespierre surprised everybody, especially his friends, who did not believe in his eloquence. But, it will be said, La Clos, after the death of Robespierre, would have avowed himself the author of the speeches. Why should he have done so? La Clos was above the need of this still perilous glory; and besides, it would have been the avowal of an act of cowardice. We must, however, believe, since some one was found to record it, that La Clos must have said so, though it might have been but once.

This man was always ready for anything. After the 9th Thermidor, Tallien, fearing him in his turn, and wishing to put him *out of politics*, gave him the supervision of mortgages. La Clos, according to his custom, marked his tenure of office by reforms. Director of mortgages! a curious position in those years of trouble, when no man's land was sacred.

Bonaparte, having become first consul, appointed La Clos general of a brigade in the army of the Rhine, where he distinguished himself among the bravest. He passed thence into Italy with Mar-

mont, and took part there in the most glorious feats of arms. Bonaparte, observing that La Clos had been a profound student of mankind, gave him, on his return to France, some missions of the most delicate character. At last, to give a striking proof of his esteem, he appointed him commander of the artillery destined for the coasts of Italy. Scarce, however, had La Clos arrived at Tarento, when he sank, overcome by ten years of unremitting struggles. He died without thinking of death, his mind preoccupied with the future glories of France. One of his officers proposed for his epitaph these six glorious words: "Good citizen, brave soldier, loyal friend."

A strange destiny was theirs who commenced their career under the reign of Madame Dubarry, and closed it under that of Bonaparte! a picture sketched out by Boucher and finished by David!

On the first publication of the above essay on Choderlos de la Clos, I received a note conched in the following terms:—

"You have appreciated La Clos justly; your statements are for the most part exact; but why have you not opened the *Almanac of Twenty-five Thousand Addresses*?"

I opened the *Almanac* in question, and found there, *Choderlos de la Clos, eligible, 15 Rue de Provence*. I went to the Rue Provence, where I learned that M. Choderlos de la Clos had died during the past year. I was directed to his brother-in-law, M. B—— de T——, whose garden lies under my windows. On my return I found a card at my house from M. B—— de T——. I went to his residence.

Although only connected by marriage, M. B—— de T—— is a true member of the family of La Clos by his wit.

He told me what I knew, and what I did not know.

The father of Choderlos de la Clos was of Moorish descent.

I had said, on the authority of the Biography of Michaud, "A good son, a good husband, a good father." The following is the history of his marriage: Mademoiselle Duperré was one of the noblest and fairest heiresses of La Rochelle. As her mother was dead, she did the honors of the house of M. Duperré. She learned one day that M. de la Clos, the author of the *Liaisons Dangereuses*, had come to La Rochelle to pass at least one season, in order to continue his studies on artillery. "Never," she exclaimed, with horror, "never shall M. de la Clos be received in our house." La Clos answered the officious friend, who repeated the remark to him, "I am thinking of marrying; and intend to marry Mademoiselle Duperré before six months." In fact, six months afterward, La Clos was the brother-in-law of the young sailor, who became afterward the Admiral Duperré, minister of marine.

La Clos had three children, two boys and a girl. The three are now dead without issue. The eldest died at twenty-five, colonel of artillery; the younger died last year, in Paris, eligible, as the *Almanac of Twenty-five Thousand Addresses* testifies. He suffered much from attacks, almost always unjust, made upon the memory of his father. These attacks upon the father reached the son. M. Charles de la Clos

collected everything which could aid in the full appreciation of his father.

The author of the *Liaisons Dangereuses* died at Tarento, general of artillery, poorer than Malfilâtre and Gilbert. France was not then rich, at least in ready money. He died proud of the triumphs of his country, deeply saddened by the destitution which threatened his wife and his three children. Fortune, doubtless, took care of them. The last La Clos died with an income of fifty thousand livres.

I hope, some day, to communicate to the public some very curious letters written by La Clos to his wife, especially the farewell letters of La Clos the Revolutionist, dated from prison, the 9th Thermidor, (he was to die on the 10th,) and the farewell letters of La Clos the Soldier, dated from Tarento.

A. II.

GRÉTRY.

IN July, 1726, an old German curé, a rosy canon of Notre-Dame de Presburg, who was passing through Blegnez, on a journey to Liège, suddenly paused on his route in that village, at the recollection that a well-beloved niece lived there, surrounded by the poetic associations of country-life. It was after vespers on a Sunday, and the old curé, who had heard at a distance the solemn sound of the bells, soon caught the notes of the violin.—“That is he,” he exclaimed, “that rogue of a fellow is solacing himself, and his wife as well, for the troubles of life, by playing on the violin.”—As he said these words, he resumed his course, in the direction of the lively sound of the violin. Meeting a peasant, he asked him, “My friend, does not Jean Noé Grétry live there on the other side of the church, at the end of the hedge?”—“Yes, Monsieur le Curé,” said the peasant, whose legs showed a slight disposition to keep time to the tune; “the best inn in the country. In faith, you may drink there, if it please you, beer and brandy to your liking, and, if your heart is so inclined, he will give you a dance with some pretty girls, who are brisk ones too, if that is to your taste.”

The curé kept on his way.—“The devil!” said he, “my nephew is a wicked fellow! he intoxicates his neighbors in all sorts of ways. It is a misdirected charity; but, after all, giving these poor creatures a little diversion is a sin which the Deity himself absolves with a smile; so let us see what is going on.”—As he passed the last column of the church, an unexpected sight, as by magic, met his eyes. To have some idea of the surprise of the old curé of the austere cathedral of Presburg, fancy to yourself a festival by Teniers in a landscape by Berghem. Call to mind a *Flemish Gayety*, with its rural decorations, its lively colors, its simple joys, its boisterous mirth, its picturesque carelessness! On the first glance, the curé saw through the openings of the old elm-trees, and at the end of a most verdant lawn his nephew, Noé Grétry, who, perched on the top of a barrel, was playing in a style to turn the heads of the most obstinate of Flemings. All the blooming youth of the country were dancing noisily around him; there were even, here and there, some women beyond the prime of life, and even superannuated lovers, who forgot their age in grotesque pirouetting. Nothing could be more animated, more gay, or more delicious, than this spectacle; but this was not the whole of the picture. Before the cottage of the fiddler, both picturesque and rustic (a cottage which all the week was the dwelling of a small farmer, and became on the Sunday a tavern for carousing), half a dozen tables were seen scattered about, to which the dancers resorted in turns, to toss off a pint of beer, or discuss a slice of ham. In the inside of the cottage, the graver tipplers of the village

were playing at cards and talking of by-gone days ; in the distance, the herdsman of Blegnez, who was desirous of taking his part in the festival, played on the bag-pipes, as he drove back to the stables the dun cows and bellowing bulls ; the cuckoo threw in, now and then, his mocking song ; the bullfinch his melancholy strain. The sky was blue enough for a Flemish sky ; the declining sun seemed to smile on all these rustic joys ; the plain gave to the passing wind the perfume of its flowery meads ; nothing was wanting to the picture. I could describe to you with pleasure the follies of the dance and the Olympian roars of the drinkers ; but your imagination is richer than my pen. I return to my old curé. I had forgotten the swing, which gayly decorated with ribands and flowers, was suspended between a barn and the trunk of an old oak, over a rich clover-field, which had just been reaped. As the canon passed, a pretty girl of sixteen or seventeen was allowing herself to be swung by a young lad in his Sunday finery, who appeared to be looking at her with all his eyes. M. le curé passed quickly along, lowering his eyes, but, curé though he was, he lowered them a little too late.—“ Good heavens ! good heavens ! ” he muttered between his teeth. He kept on all the while, recommending himself to Providence. Tripping by the side of the barn on tiptoe, he arrived during a country-dance, almost unobserved, at the door of his well-beloved niece. It was a good ten years since Mademoiselle Diendonné Campinado had suffered herself, very willingly, to be carried off by Noé Grétry, whose adventurous fortunes she had followed with pious resignation. They were married in the presence

of God, and before the notary ; but the Campinado family, notwithstanding the marriage had hardly pardoned the young couple. The old curé, who wished to forgive them before he died, had stopped with this design at the village of Blegnez. All that he had just before seen, however, had a little weakened his desire of granting absolution. As he was crossing the sill of the cottage, his niece, whom he had formerly looked upon as the most timid and most devout of the girls of his chapter, suddenly bounced out in a very pretty, but very loose *déshabille*, with a pint of beer in each hand, and a snatch of a song on her lips. At the sight of her old uncle, she dropped the pots of beer from her hands, but the last words of the song lingered on her lips. "Oh, my uncle!" she exclaimed. "Noé! Noé! come and embrace our uncle." And with these words she threw herself, completely overcome, into the arms of the old curé. The fiddler, in spite of his taste for music and the dance, abandoned on the instant his dancers and his violin. "Oh, my dear child," said the curé, "what a hell you live in!"—"In faith," said Noé, "if hell was as merry a place as this, you might spare your Latin, uncle. But you will take a little pint of beer, will you not? What have I said, beer? I forgot that I am addressing a curé. Wife, go down as quick as you can to the end of the cellar: there are some bottles left there for special occasions; and is not this such an occasion?"

The uncle was, doubtless, about to make his protest, when a dozen dancers, not knowing what better to do with themselves, and induced besides by curiosity, boisterously advanced to the door of the cot-

tage. "Heavens!" exclaimed the curé, "I have not yet reached the end. So, so, nephew, I hope that I shall not presently be forced to dance with you."—"Come, come, uncle, Heaven would not frown on such an act; but your legs need not be uneasy on that score. To prove my good intentions to you, I will yield you my place, where you may preach a sermon to our young girls at your ease, it will be like another song, but I will not guaranty a great number of converts. Meanwhile, let us drink a cup and salute this fine sunset."

The wife of the fiddler, with charming grace, had just presented a mould-incrusted bottle, and glasses. Noé made the cork fly like a man who understood the business, poured out with great freedom, and, willing or not, the old curé must needs drink two glasses in succession of choice white wine, full of fire, and worthy of a German canon. "Uncle," continued Noé, "had not my godfather good reasons for baptizing me by the name of Noah? I have not planted the vine myself, but I have cultivated it. Come, it is not enough to empty one's glass to-day, we must have a tune on the violin. But where is Jean?"—"Wait," said the mother, with an affectionate smile, "there he comes with some young birds."

Jean was a pretty child of seven and a half years, who had all the grace and roguishness of his age. He smiled as he caressed three young thrushes, without appearing to care about monsieur the curé. "Come," said Noé to him, "embrace your uncle; but first of all let those birds go. Have I not spoken to you often enough of the wickedness of bird-catching?" And as the child resisted, he continued: "If you

will mind me, I will let you off of your grammar lesson." The child still resisted. "Well, let us see, you shall come with me and play a tune on the violin."

This time the child was persuaded. He glanced sadly at the birds, and suddenly opened his hand, from which two young thrushes flew to an old elm; the third lighted with great difficulty on the thatch. "May God guide them," said Noé, resuming his violin. The child had lost no time. He sprang like a cat up the staircase to his little room, took down from its hook an old violin, which his father had come across in the course of his travels; and, as he descended, was already tuning it. The old curé stopped him as he passed. "How," he exclaimed, "a violin in the hands of a child of seven? Ah, my son, what a fatal destiny! At your age, you should have only the censer in your hands. You should sing only the praises of the Lord. Are you not one of the choristers?" continued the uncle, playing with Jean's curly locks. "Ah well, yes," said Jean, making a charming face, "chorister! that is as good as anything else."—"He is a wild boy," said the mother, "we do not know what to do with him. He will hear of nothing but the violin."—"But that is no calling. Tell me, my dear," resumed the curé, "will you follow me to Presburg? I will give you a benefice there."—"What a pretty little canon!" exclaimed the mother. "Me a canon!" exclaimed the child, running off.

The little devil incarnate leaped on the cask where his father was waiting for him; and there, his locks flying in the wind, and his countenance lighted up,

he set to work to scrape in the best style, an old country-dance. The good canon could not refrain from smiling. He took his niece's hand, and with an air half-serious, half-comic, said to her: "Ah, my niece, my poor Jeanne! what a child you have there! You are in a fine road, with a fiddler on one side and a fiddler on the other."—"Come, come, uncle, all roads lead to Rome; and one can reach there as well by a good stroke of the bow as by a fine sermon. Is it a great evil, forsooth, to gladden once a week the hearts of all these good peasants for a little while? But do not let us talk any more about it, let us think only of the joy of our meeting."

The old curé listened to reason without further opposition; he turned somewhat unconsciously toward the dance. The festival went on notwithstanding the canon's presence. The supper was worthy of the festival. He left the next day very well pleased with the hospitality of his nephew. He left with a benediction on the modest cottage which sheltered the joyous family. Jean escorted him to the next village, all the while gathering flowers, and frightening away the sparrows. "Farewell," said the uncle, as he dropped a tear, "may Saint Cecilia protect and God guide you! Ah, that Grétry family," he resumed a little farther on, "are predestined to be fiddlers."

Four years afterward, the young rogue, who was not twelve years old, carried off the first prize for the violin, at Liège. He was a true prodigy in those days, in which prodigies were not common. As there were no newspapers, this triumph did not go beyond the province of Liège. Jean Grétry obtained

only that half-celebrity which makes ardent minds wretched ; but it was sufficient to captivate the heart of a young lady of Liège of high birth, who was his noblest and truest glory. He married her in the happiest days of his youth, and hence we have André Grétry, whose history I am about to relate.

It was not without a reason that I commenced with this little Flemish picture. I was desirous of seeking Grétry's true cradle ; there are certainly curious researches to be made in the genealogies of poets and musicians. Who knows if four generations were not necessary to perfect Mozart or Molière for the world ? Who knows but that poetry, which is also music, is a treasure slowly amassed in families, a sacred heritage of which God alone appoints the heir ? Every poet arrays himself somewhat in the old clothes of his grandfather. But it is time to come to André Grétry.

He was born at Liege the 11th of February, 1741. He entered on life, or rather on music, very young. He was scarcely four years old when he was already sensible to musical rhythm. One day, while he was alone in the chimney corner, one of those boiling pots, about which the German poets have sung so well, fixed his dawning thoughts by its monotonous song. At the same moment the cricket chirped between two broken hearth-bricks, the cat slumbering on the cinders, made audible her measured purr. This domestic symphony at first amused the child. He looked around him to assure himself that he was really alone. He surveyed with an animated eye the pewter plates on the dresser, the yellow curtains

of the alcove; two old violins, released from service, hung as glorious trophies over the chimney-piece; finding himself alone with the music, he began to dance with all his might. After the country-dance, he was desirous of investigating thoroughly the secret of the music, and so upset the water of the kettle into the intensely-hot coal fire. The explosion was so violent that the poor dancer fell to the ground suffocated and scalded over almost his entire body. He was taken, half-dead, to his maternal grandmother's, a country-house in the neighborhood of Liège, where he passed two delightful years. He was there without a master and without cares, entirely at liberty, ransacking the country morning and night, loved by all for his gracefulness and pretty face, and (must it be believed?) loving already, he does not say whom, but many girls, large and small, at once—loving already too much (it is himself here who speaks) to intrust it to any of them!

Jean Grétry, who had so derided the chorister-boys, who was so good a philosopher at seven, at a later date had all the weakness of the philosophers. Thus, he made his son, willing or unwilling, a chorister-boy at the collegiate church of which he was first violin. Chorister-boy! Grétry never could recall that without a shudder! This was not all: poor André was soon abandoned to the most barbarous music-master that ever existed. In his *Memoirs*, Grétry recounts with bitterness all the tortures he made him undergo—tragi-comic tortures; but listen to him: "He sometimes placed us on our knees on a round log, so that on the slightest motion we tumbled over—I have seen him muffle the head of a child of

six years in an enormous old peruke, and fasten him up in that condition against the wall, some feet from the ground, and there force him by blows of a rod to sing the music which he held in one hand, and beat time with the other. The poor child, although he had a very pretty face, resembled a bat nailed to the wall, and rent the air with his cries." André Grétry passed from four to five years in this horrible inquisition. Thanks to his master, he was but an indifferent scholar in music; but another master, the master of all the great artists, chance, came to his aid. A company of Italian singers passing through Liège, performed there the operas of Pergolesi. Grétry attended all the performances, and became passionately fond of Italian music. His father was so charmed with his progress, that he wanted him to sing, at all hazards, some sacred music at the church on the following Sunday. It was an Italian air on these words of the Virgin: "*Non semper super prata casta florescit rosa.*" Everybody was astonished, and cried, "What a prodigy! How comes he to sing so? It is worthy of the opera!" His old master himself could not avoid smiling. He sang in this way every Sunday for many years. He, however, had a susceptible heart, and became desperately enamored of all the Flemish blondes who came to hear him; he loved those most whom he did not see; it was the hope rather than the memory of love—revery rather than passion. He abandoned the song and the church for composition and solitude. I will not recount all the little joys and all the little misadventures of our musician. I will not tell you how he studied, like a true poet, the sound of the wind, the rain, the storm, and the fountain; the song of the

birds, and the beating of the heart of a young German girl of his neighborhood, who was induced by the love of music even to love the musician. It will not do to linger too long over the infant efforts of love and of genius. His first serious work (we are no longer speaking of love) was a mass in music. This was his triumph at Liège; like his father before him, he became the prodigy of the district. Foreseeing that he would get no farther if he remained at Liège, he was desirous of setting out for Rome—for that sun of fire before which the flowers of his genius were to expand. One Palm-Sunday, on coming out, after mass, the people of Liège all exclaimed, with affectionate regret, “We have heard the farewell of young Grétry.” He went early in April, went for a long time; he went, poor bird of passage, to exile himself far from his country, far from his family! But is an artist ever in exile? The spring had come, the good mother wept as she made ready the little baggage of her son. The careless traveller was the only one who diffused any gayety about the sweet and calm Flemish interior. The father played the saddest of airs on his faithful violin; the dog himself was restless. In the neighborhood there was still greater sadness. The pretty German girl, almost always seated at her window, shed a silent tear, which came from the heart! She no longer sang, she no longer laughed; in vain did the spring again bloom beneath her window; the springtime of her heart was blighted!

Thus, at the end of March, 1757, did André Grétry set out on foot, with knapsack on his back, and staff in hand; with his eighteen years all fresh, pure, and

crowned with hopes ; with his father's blessings and his mother's tears ! He had some travelling companions, two pistols which had been given to him with the remark, "*Rodrigo, art thou brave ?*" an old smuggler, and two students, one of whom was an abbé ; the latter did not go very far. The smuggler was named Remacle ; he was an old miser, who made regularly every year two journeys from Liège to Rome, in company with young students ; he carried into Italy the finest laces of Flanders ; he brought back from Rome reliques and old slippers of the Pope, which caused great joy in all the convents of the Low Countries. Old Remacle had a stout Champenois youth as an honorary associate, who made it his business to ferret out and beat the officers of the customs. This journey, or rather pilgrimage of Grétry's is almost like a chapter of *Gil Blas*. The caravan was one of the most grotesque : a dreamy musician, who was always singing church-music ; a poor, sorrowful abbé, who looked back every minute toward the steeple of his village ; a young medical student of the liveliest kind, who amused himself with all the men, and especially with all the women, whom he met on the road ; a great drunken Champenois, sorely smitten with the tavern-girls after he had taken a pint ; and finally a miserly old smuggler, grave and silent as a Fleming, and always in hostilities with the officers. The first day, the rear-guard, that is to say the abbé arrived at the sleeping-place a long time after the others ; and the student predicted that he would not measure off twenty-five leagues with his delicate feet. At the termination of the twenty-five leagues, the poor abbé turned his back to the caravan, to retrace

his course to Liège. The caravan was none the less gay for his absence. Old Remacle was soon enchanted with his young companions, on account of two little adventures. One day, on entering an inn to dine, a colossal German woman, the landlady of the premises, jumped on Grétry's neck, gave him a thousand caresses, and feasted him like a prince. Never had Remacle dined so well. At dessert, she poured out liqueurs for every one, all the while addressing a thousand tender remarks to Grétry, who did not understand German.—“It is very fortunate that it is not necessary to understand them,” said he. Remacle offered to settle the bill; she refused the money; he did not give her another opportunity to refuse it. Grétry at last understood that this good hostess had a son of similar age and appearance, studying at Trèves; she had caressed Grétry in honor of her son, like a good mother who must open her heart at every remembrance. Now for the other adventure: Some days after, at another inn, our travellers took their seats at the table for supper; the servant-girls are all in a flutter; all the kitchen furnaces are blazing; chickens are decapitated; hams are taken down from the hooks; the oldest bottles in the cellar are disinterred. Grétry and the smugglers know not what to think; at last the student returns, with a lancet in his hand.—“What have you been about, scapegrace?”—“I have been bleeding the host and hostess, after which I put them to sleep.”—“Imprudent fellow!”—“Bah!” said he, with a burst of laughter; “they are as old as Time himself!”

Other adventures also occurred, to convince Remacle that his fellow travellers were worthy of him.

Ever in dread of the before-mentioned officers, the old smuggler forced them to make a *detour* of some leagues, to see, as he said with a disinterested air, a superb monastery, where alms were bestowed once a week on all the poor of the country. On entering the great hall, in the midst of a noisy crowd, Grétry saw a fat monk, mounted on a platform, who was angrily superintending this Christian charity. He looked as if he would like rather to exterminate his fellow-creatures than aid them to live; he was just bullying a poor French vagabond who implored his aid. When he suddenly saw the noble face of Grétry, he approached the young musician. —“It is curiosity which brings you here,” he remarked with vexation.—“It is true,” said Grétry, bowing; “the beauty of your monastery, the sublimity of the scenery, and the desire of contemplating the asylum where the unfortunate traveller is received with so much humanity, have drawn us from our route. In beholding you, I have seen the angel of mercy. All the victims of sorrow should bless your edifying gentleness. Tell me, father, do you make as many happy every day as I have just witnessed?”

The monk, irritated by this bantering, begged Grétry to return whence he came.—“Father,” retorted Grétry, “have the evangelists taught you this mode of bestowing alms, giving with one hand and striking with the other?”—A low murmur was heard through the hall; the monk not knowing what to say, complained of the tooth-ache; the cunning student lost no time, but running up to him with an air of touching compassion, “I am a surgeon,”

he said, as he forced him down on the bench. The monk tried to push him off, but he held on well.—“It is Heaven which has directed me to you, father.”—Willing or not, the monk had to open his mouth.—“Courage, father, the great saints were all martyrs! the Savior was crucified; and you may at least let me pull out a tooth.”—The monk struggled: “Never, never!” he exclaimed. The student turned with great coolness toward the bystanders, who were all laughing in their sleeves.—“My friends”—(he addressed crippled travellers, mountain brigands, and poor people of every class)—“my friends, for the love of God, who suffered, come and hold this good father; I do not want him to suffer any longer!”

The beggars understood the joke; four of them separated from the group, and came to the surgeon's aid. The monk struggled furiously, but it was no use to kick and scream; he had to submit. Grétry was not the last to come to his friend's aid; the malicious student seized the first tooth he got hold of, and wrenched the head of the monk by a turn of his elbow, to the great joy of the beggars, who saw themselves revenged in a most opportune manner.—“Well, father, what do you think of it?” asked Grétry, after the operation; “I am sure you do not now suffer at all!”—The monk shook with rage; the other monks attracted by his cries, soon arrived, but it was too late.

I pass over the love of Grétry for the fair Tyrolese in silence. He at last arrived in Italy.—“No more snows, no more mountains; but an enamelled mead, on which young girls are singing! It was the first

lesson in music which I received in Italy. The song of these fair Milanese has left an eternal echo in my soul."—He made his entrance into Rome on a fine Sunday in June, in the midst of a dozen pleasure-carriages, in which blooming Roman girls were lovingly singing and smiling. He was enchanted. He wandered until evening among palaces and churches, the renown of which had long filled his imagination; but, nevertheless, in the evening, after having seen these edifices, which are the wonders of art; the fair Roman women, who are the wonders of nature; and the exquisite sky, so pure and blue, which seems one of the gates of Paradise, Grétry recalled with a melancholy charm, the cloudy sky of his dear country, the blonde Flemish girls of Liège, the sweet and calm household of his father, and also that pretty neighbor, who had with a tear bade him so tender an adieu! The most beautiful country in the world to the traveller is always the country in which his heart has blossomed. But patience! Grétry's heart is hardly in its spring-time!

Grétry made his *début* at Rome in sacred music. He drew his inspiration from the masters of sacred art; from the amiable and graceful Casali, the grave Orisicchio, the noble and austere Lustrini. It was in the second year of the reign of Clement XIII. Sacred music had assumed profane airs under the reign of Benedict XIV.; but the new pope, full of zeal for his church, had called music to order; music had again become serious; resumed her sad and pious, slow and vague solemnity: it was truly the music which ascends direct to heaven on the wings of archangels, after having sanctified the hearts of sinners. Grétry

like the divine Pergolesi, was initiated into the sentiment and the melody of this music. He commenced a *De Profundis*, which was to vie in grandeur and solemnity with the *Stabat*; but as this *De Profundis* was to be sung only at his own funeral, he was in no great hurry to finish it, and it never was finished.

There was a college in existence at Rome for the students, painters, and musicians of Liège. Grétry had, as a room-mate in this college, the scapegrace student, whom he had as his travelling companion. He was a very agreeable neighbor; for example, when Grétry, after having ransacked the Roman Campagna in search of antique ruins, fell sick, the surgeon, who made their room a complete cemetery, remarked, in a tender tone, as he felt his pulse: "Ah, my poor friend, I have lost a *tibia*, and I hope you will have the kindness in case you die to allow me." . . . Grétry contrived not to fulfil this request. He made the acquaintance of an organist who taught him to play on the harpsichord. He was a very poor master, but he had a pretty wife, and all the lessons were not lost. Grétry made such great progress that the poor man cried out one day, in a transport, his eyes filled with tears: "*O Dio! O Dio santissimo! questo è un prodiggio da vero!*"

Sometime after Grétry was taken by an abbé of his acquaintance to the house of Piccini, who assumed the airs of a great genius toward our young Fleming. He did not say a word to him, but continued to compose an oratorio, as if he had been all alone. After an hour's audience in this style, Grétry left, not as he came, for he had come radiant with hope. He did not lose courage, he had still greater

ardor, but he fell sick again. Desirous of escaping from his terrible room-mate, and trusting to chance, he withdrew into the country about Rome, committing the issue of his illness to God and to nature. The next day, finding himself on the mountain of Millini, he entered the habitation of a hermit who was good fellow enough, although an Italian. (It is Grétry who says this.) The hermit received him like a pilgrim, and advised him to establish himself in his hermitage, in order to breathe pure air, and recruit his strength. Grétry shared his retreat for three months. This little pilgrimage completed what study could not effect. On leaving this little Thebaid, Grétry felt himself all at once a true musician. On the day of his departure, being desirous of composing an air to some words of Metastasio, he felt conscious that he was at last master of music, that he controlled it, that he had all its keys. "*Ah, fra Mauro!*" said he to his hermit, "I shall remember you to the day of my death."

On his return to Rome, he set to music, for the carnival and the theatre of Aliberti, the *Vendangeuses*. The musicians of the country cried out scandalous: "What! has this little abbé of Liège [Grétry wore the dress of an abbé] come to cut our grass?" This made Grétry's triumph only the more conspicuous.

He did not forget his friends or his family. He had sent, in competition for the situation of chapel-master, the *confitebor*. He obtained the place, but did not leave; however, he soon quitted Italy. He left Rome for Geneva. He travelled with a German baron who was of the most taciturn kind. They passed

over Mount Cenis together: they bravely descended in a sledge drawn by two Savoyards of twelve years of age. On arriving at Geneva, Grétry hurried to the theatre, to hear the French music, for which he had no great liking. At Ferney, Voltaire received him like a brother. "Go to Paris," said he to him: "it is thence that your genius will soar to immortality."—"You speak familiarly about it," said Grétry; "one may see that you are accustomed to the word."—"I!" said Voltaire, pleasantly; "I would exchange a hundred years of immortality for a good digestion." Grétry set out for Paris, after having left a memento with the Genevese—the opera of *Gertrude*. At Paris he felt somewhat out of his element. As he was young, a good-looking youth, and witty withal, he soon made friends, among others Grenze and Vernet. In spite of these friends, who were worth a great many others, he despaired of a people who fainted at Rameau's music. The Prince of Conti invited him, thanks to Vernet, to give him a specimen of his music; but the prince, after having heard it, appeared to be very weary. Grétry re-entered his hotel, completely cast down. Two anonymous letters were very opportunely placed in his hand. One was from Liège: "Rash man! are you not going to contend with the Philidors and the Monsignys?" The other dated from Paris: "So you think, honest citizen of Liège, that you are going to enchant the Parisians? Get rid of that idea, my dear fellow; pack your trunks, and return to Liège, to sing your caterwauling music." After a year, passed in poverty and sadness, Marmontel came to him with the opera of the *Huron*. Grétry, in de-

spair, composed a short musical masterpiece for the poet's sorry verses. The opera was soon played with great success. In Paris it is all or nothing. The evening before Grétry was an adventurer without resources, the next day he was a great musician, everywhere sought after, everywhere applauded. His triumph was rapid. He did not sleep that night. He thought of his father. But that same night the poor violin-player laid down to his last sleep. In the morning, Grenze came and said, "Grétry, come with me; I want to show you a picture which will give you great pleasure." He led him to the neighborhood of the Comédie-Italienne, and there pointed with his finger to a sign freshly painted, *Au Huron, Nicolle, Tobacconist.*" Grétry who did not smoke, entered the shop immediately, and called for a pound of tobacco. "What fine tobacco!" he afterward exclaimed.

I do not wish to take you to all Grétry's operas, of which there are as many as forty-four. You know as well as I do that the *Tableau Parlant*, *Zémire et Azor*, *La Caravanne*, *Richard Cœur-de-Lion*, *Collinette-à-la-Cour*, were for half a century heard on all lips, on all harpsichords, in all theatres, and in all hearts. Voltaire did not forget the young Flemish pilgrim. He wrote a bad opera for him, which did not inspire the musician at all. Voltaire acted like a great wit, having learned that an opera of Grétry's, *Le Jugement de Midas*, had been applauded at the Italienne, after having been hissed by the nobility at Madame de Montesson's theatre, he sent this pretty quatrain to the musician:—

Grétry, our noble lords decry
Thy songs that Paris loves to hear;
True, their chief claims to greatness lie
Too often in their length of ear.

Grenze had one day taken Grétry to the studio of Gromdon, his old master. In this, as in all other studios, there were numerous sketches, but there was also a charming face, such a one as Murillo or Van Dyck had never painted. It was the painter's daughter, and undoubtedly his masterpiece. Our good musician scarcely looked at any other picture, but departed, exclaiming, "What a great painter!" He returned to the studio; so, too, did Grenze: but, must I say it, Grenze was drawn there by a fatal love, which he tremblingly kept concealed in the bottom of his heart. He loved his master's wife; but this is not the history of Grenze. In those days the love which proceeded from a pure heart ended in marriage. After the obstacles which are a matter of course, Grétry married his dear Jeannette. He arranged to his taste a delightful home, almost like a Flemish picture. He realized the dream of his early years. He grasped at happiness with both hands, and happiness, miraculously without doubt, took her seat of her own accord at his hearth, although glory was there already. It was a fine time for them. Jeannette, like an April bird, sang from the dawn the charming airs of the musician. She painted as an agreeable amusement, loves and shepherdesses in the style of Boucher. The Love was Grétry, the shepherdess herself. During this happy time, all was roses and smiles, kisses and songs!

They were soon blessed with three daughters—

three charming flowers in the family-garden. I said three flowers. You will see why. Jeannette nursed them all, like a true mother as she was. Grétry cherished them like three dreams of love. Alas, they were but dreams !

However, if the man had all the joys of marriage and of family, the musician had all the more noisy joys of pride. He was sung in all the four musical countries of Europe. He was the man in fashion all over Paris, even at the court, where he found a godfather and godmother for his third daughter. The queen was a great admirer of Grétry's face, which, according to Vernet, was the faithful image of that of Pergolesi.*

Grétry was therefore happy. Happy in his wife and children, in his old mother, who had come to sanctify his house, with her sweet and venerable face. Happy in fortune, happy in reputation. The years passed quickly away ! He was one day very

* It was about this time that he met Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who was in his eyes the greatest man in France and Navarre. At a representation of *La Fausse Magie* he heard these words within two steps of him : "Monsieur Rousseau, there is Grétry whom you was asking about a little while ago." Grétry rushed toward Rousseau. "How happy I am to see you !" said the philosopher to him. "I thought that my heart was dead, your music has found it living. I wish to know you, or rather I already know you by your operas. I wish to be your friend. Are you married ?"—"Yes."—"To a woman of wit !"—"No."—"So I supposed."—"She is the daughter of a painter, she is simple as Nature."—"So I supposed. I love artists, they are children of Nature. I want to see your wife." Jean-Jacques pressed Grétry's hand many times. They went out together, and, passing through the *Rue Française*, Rousseau wanted to jump over a heap of stones. Grétry seized his arm : "Take care, Monsieur Rousseau !" The philosopher, irritated, roughly withdrew his arm. "Let me make use of my powers !" He thereupon chose his own path without troubling himself about Grétry, and Grétry never saw him more.

much astonished to learn that his daughter Jenny was fifteen. Alas ! a year afterward the poor child was no longer in the family, neither was happiness. But for this sad history we must return to the past. Grétry, during his sojourn at Rome, in the spring-time of his life, was fond of seeking religious inspiration in the garden of an almost deserted convent. He observed one day, in the summer-house, an old monk of venerable form, who was separating seeds with a meditative air, and at the same time observing them with a microscope. The absent-minded musician approached him in silence. "Do you like flowers?" the monk asked him.—"Very much."—"At your age, however, we only cultivate the flowers of life; the culture of the flowers of earth is pleasing only to the man who has fulfilled his task. It is then almost like cultivating his recollections. The flowers recall the birth, the natal land, the garden of the family, and what more? You know better than I who have thrown to forgetfulness all worldly enjoyments!"—"I do not see, father," replied Grétry, "why you separate these seeds which seem to me to be all alike."—"Look through this microscope, and see this black speck on those which I place aside; but I wish to carry the horticultural lesson still further." He took a flower-pot, made six holes in the earth, and planted three of the good seeds, and three of the spotted ones. "Recollect that the bad ones are on the side of the crack, and when you come and take a walk, do not forget to watch the stalks as they grow."

Grétry found a melancholy charm in returning frequently to the garden of the convent. As he

passed he each time cast a glance on the old flower-pot. The six stems at first shot up, each equally verdant. The spotted seeds soon grew the fastest, to his great surprise. He was about to accuse the old monk of having lost his wits; but what was afterward his sorrow, when he saw his three plants gradually fading away in their spring-time! With each setting-sun a leaf fell and dried up, while the leaves of the other stems thrived more and more with every breeze, every ray of the sun, every drop of dew. He went to dream every day before his dear plants, with exceeding sadness. He soon saw them wither away, even to the last leaf. On the same day the others were in flower.

This accident of nature was a cruel horoscope. Thirty years afterward poor Grétry saw three other flowers alike fated, fade and fall under the wintry wind of death. He had forgotten the name of the flowers of the Roman convent, but in dying he still repeated the names of the others. They were his three daughters, Jenny, Lucile, and Antoinette. "Ah!" exclaimed the poor musician, in relating the death of his three daughters, "I have violated the laws of Nature to obtain genius. I have watered with my blood the most frivolous of my operas, I have nourished my old mother, I have seized on reputation by exhausting my heart and my soul, Nature has avenged herself on my children! My poor children, I foredoomed them to death!"

Grétry's daughters all died at the age of sixteen. There is something strange in their life and in their death, which strikes the dreamer and the poet. This sport of destiny, this freak of death, this ven-

geance of Nature, appears here invested with all the charms of romance. You will see.

Jenny had the pale sweet countenance of a virgin. On seeing her, Greuze said one day: "If I ever paint Purity, I shall paint Jenny."—"Make haste!" murmured Grétry, already a prey to sad presentiments. "Then she is going to be married?" said Greuze. Grétry did not answer. Soon, however, seeking to blind himself, he continued: "She will be the staff of my old age; like Antigone, she will lead her father into the sun at the decline of life."

The next day Grétry came unexpectedly upon Jenny, looking more pale and depressed than ever. She was playing on the harpsichord, but sweetly and slowly. As she was playing an air from *Richard Cœur-de-Lion*, in a melancholy strain, the poor father fancied that he was listening to the music of angels. One of her friends entered—"Well, Jenny, you are going to-night to the ball?"—"Yes, yes, to the ball," answered poor Jenny, looking toward heaven, and suddenly resuming, "No, I shall not go, my dance is ended." Grétry pressed his daughter to his heart. "Jenny, are you suffering?"—"It is over!" said she.

She bent her head and died instantly, without a struggle! Poor Grétry asked if she was asleep. She slept with the angels.

Lucile was a contrast to Jenny; she was a beautiful girl, gay, enthusiastic, and frolicsome, with all the caprices of such a disposition. She was almost a portrait of her father, and possessed, besides, the same heart and the same mind. "Who

knows," said poor Grétry, "but that her gayety may save her." She was unfortunately one of those precocious geniuses who devour their youth. At thirteen she had composed an opera which was played everywhere, *Le Mariage d'Antonio*. A journalist, a friend of Grétry, who one day found himself in Lucile's apartment, without her being aware of it, so much was she engrossed with her harp, has related the rage and madness which transported her during her contests with inspiration that was often rebellious. "She wept, she sang, she struck the harp with incredible energy. She either did not see me, or took no notice of me; for my own part, I wept with joy, in beholding this little girl transported with so glorious a zeal, and so noble an enthusiasm for music."

Lucile had learned to read music before she knew her alphabet. She had been so long lulled to sleep with Grétry's airs, that at the age when so many other young girls think only of hoops and dolls, she had found sufficient music in her soul for the whole of a charming opera. She was a prodigy. Had it not been for death, who came to seize her at sixteen like her sister, the greatest musician of the eighteenth century would, perhaps, have been a woman. But the twig, scarcely green, snapped at the moment when the poor bird commenced her song, Grétry had Lucile married at the solicitation of his friends. "Marry her, marry her," they incessantly repeated; "if Love has the start of Death, Lucile is safe." Lucile suffered herself to be married with the resignation of an angel, foreseeing that the marriage would not be of long duration. She suffered herself to be

married to one of those artists of the worst order, who have neither the religion of art nor the fire of genius, and who have still less heart, for the heart is the home of genius. The poor Lucile saw at a glance the desert to which her family had exiled her. She consoled herself with a harp and a harpsichord; but her husband, who had been brought up like a slave, cruelly took delight, with a coward's vengeance, in making her feel all the chains of Hymen. She would have died, like Jenny, on her father's bosom, amidst her loving family, after having sung her farewell song: but thanks to this barbarous fellow, she died in his presence, that is to say, alone. At the hour of her death, "Bring me my harp!" said she, raising herself a little. "The doctor has forbidden it," said this savage. She cast a bitter, yet a suppliant look, upon him. "But as I am dying!" said she. "You will die very well without that." She fell back on her pillow. "My poor father," murmured she, "I wished to bid you adieu on my harp; but here I am not free except to die!" Lucile, it is the nurse who related the scene, suddenly extended her arms, called Jenny with a broken voice, and fell asleep like her for ever.

Antoinette was sixteen. She was fair and smiling like the morn, but she was fated to die like the others. Grétry prayed and wept, as he saw her growing pale; but death was not stopped so easily. *Cruel that he is, he stops his ears, there is no use to pray to him!* Grétry, however, still hoped. "God," said he, "will be touched by my thrice bitter tears." He almost abandoned music in order to have more time to consecrate to his dear Antoinette. He anti-

cipated all her fancies, dresses, and ornaments, books and excursions, in a word she enjoyed to her heart's desire every pleasure the world could afford. At each new toy she smiled with that divine smile which seems formed for heaven. Grétry succeeded in deceiving himself; but she one day revealed to him all her ill-fortune in these words, which accidentally escaped from her: "My godmother died on the scaffold: she was a godmother of bad augury. Jenny died at sixteen, Lucile died at sixteen, and I am now sixteen myself." The godmother of Antoinette was the queen Marie-Antoinette.

Another day, Antoinette was meditating over a pink at the window. On seeing her with this flower in her hand, Grétry imagined that the poor girl was suffering herself to be carried away by a dream of love. It was the dream of death! He soon heard Antoinette murmur: "*I shall die this spring, this summer, this autumn, this winter!*" She was at the last leaf.—"So much the worse," she said; "I should like the autumn better."—"What do you say, my dear angel?" said Grétry, pressing her to his heart.—"Nothing, nothing! I was playing with death; why do you not let the children play?"

Grétry thought that a southern journey would be a beneficial change; he took his daughter to Lyons, where she had friends. For a short time she returned to her gay and careless manner. Grétry went to work again, and finished *Guillaume Tell*. He went every morning, in search of inspiration, to the chamber of his daughter, who said to him one day, on awaking: "Your music has always the odor of a poem; this piece will have that of wild thyme."

Toward autumn, she again lost her natural gayety. Gretry took his wife aside.—“You see your daughter,” said he to her. At this single word, an icy shudder seized both. They shed a torrent of tears. The same day they thought of returning to Paris.—“So we are to go back to Paris,” said Antoinette; “it is well. I shall rejoin there those whom I love.”—She spoke of her sisters. After reaching Paris, the poor, fated girl concealed all the ravages of death with care; her heart was sad, but her lips were smiling. She wished to conceal the truth from her father to the end. One day, while she was weeping and hiding her tears, she said to him with an air of gayety: “You know that I am going to the ball to-morrow, and I want to appear well dressed there. I want a pearl necklace, and shall look for it when I wake up to-morrow morning.”

She went to the ball. As she set out with her mother, Rouget Delisle, a musician more celebrated at that time than Grétry, said rapturously: “Ah, Grétry, you are a happy man! What a charming girl! what sweetness and grace!”—“Yes,” said Grétry, in a whisper, “she is beautiful and still more amiable; she is going to the ball, but in a few weeks we shall follow her together to the cemetery!”—“What a horrible idea! You are losing your senses!”—“Would I were not losing my heart! I had three daughters; she is the only one left to me, but already I must weep for her!”

A few days after this ball, she took to her bed, and fell into a sad but beautiful delirium. She had found her sisters again in this world; she walked with them hand in hand; she waltzed in

the same saloon; she danced in the same quadrille; she took them to the play; all the while recounting to them her imaginary loves. What a picture for Grétry!—"She had," he says in his *Mémoires*, "some serene moments before death. She took my hand, and that of her mother, and with a sweet smile, 'I see well,' she murmured, 'that we must bear our destiny; I do not fear death; but what is to become of you two?'—She was propped up by her pillow while she spoke with us for the last time. She was laid back, then closed her beautiful eyes, and went to join her sisters!"

Grétry is very eloquent in his grief. There is in this part of his *Mémoires* a cry which came from his heart, and wrings our own.—"Oh, my friends," he exclaims, throwing down the pen, "a tear, a tear upon the beloved tomb of my three lovely flowers, predestined to die, like those of the good Italian monk!"

In order the better to cherish his sad recollections, the poor musician played every day on the harpsichord the old religious airs which he had formerly heard at Rome, as he walked in the garden of the convent.

Madame Grétry resumed her long-neglected pencil; she passed her whole time in recalling the graceful and gentle forms of her three daughters. The revolution had swept away Grétry's fortune. Madame Grétry soon painted for the first-comer. After the first tumults of the time were over, Grétry's music was sang with more delight than ever. He let Fortune take her course, and she by degrees returned him what he had lost. But of what use is

fortune when the heart is desolate? He had not, however, yet drained the cup to the bottom; the hour had not come. He saw his dear Jeannette and his old mother die! Now he was alone! He recalled, as his grief grew deeper and deeper, the old hermit of Mount Millini,—“To live alone, one must become a hermit,” he said. But where to go? There is, not far from Paris, a beautiful Thebaid, which a great genius has made illustrious by his glory and his misfortunes. This Thebaid is called *The Hermitage*. Grétry went to take refuge in the *Hermitage*; it was there that he would evoke, in the silent night, all the beloved shades of his life; it was there that he would await death in gloomy pleasure!

Grétry found the rose-bush of Jean-Jacques at the Hermitage.—*I have planted it; I have seen it grow.*—He found a landscape full of vigor and luxuriance, which, by degrees, reconciled him to life. He abandoned music for philosophy.—“I am in the sanctuary of philosophy. Jean-Jacques has left here the bed in which he dreamed of the *Contrat Social*, the table which was the altar of genius, the crystal lamp which lighted him in his garden, when he wrote to his Julia. I am the sacristan of these precious reliques.”

In addition to this, Grétry found a friend in his solitude, an old miller of the neighborhood, whose rustic jargon and Picardian artlessness charmed the world-weary musician.

I forgot to tell you that Grétry had not lost all his children.—“Fate has deprived me of my three daughters; but the death of my brother has just given me seven children.”—These seven children

Grétry protected with his name and fortune. Gratitude, unfortunately, inspired one of his heirs with an epic poem on the *Hermitage*.*

He died in 1815, in autumn, with the flowers of his garden; he died, leaving some good deeds and master-pieces behind him, after having enchanted France during half a century. Ask our grandsires with how great a charm, how sweet a smile, and how gay a heart, they listened to him!

Fontenelle said carelessly: "There are three things in this world, which I have loved very much, without knowing anything about them, music, painting, and women." I am somewhat of his opinion. We love the more the less we know; the women know this but too well. This happy remark of the Norman poet comes very apropos to my pen, which has no wish to be scientific on pleasing music, whose chief merit is gayety and simplicity. Grétry was almost a great musician, as Watteau was almost a great painter. His inspiration has a gentle and tender reminiscence of Flanders, and at the same time the grace and gayety of Paris. He was of no school, but opened a school himself. It was owing to him that Dalayrac and Della Maria sang. He sought truth rather than display, sentiment rather than noise, grace rather than force. He left his statue on the stage, and its pedestal in the orchestra; learned as he was, he preferred inspiration to science. "I want to make faults," he said; "harmony will lose nothing by them." At the present day a multitude of more noisy masters have frightened away the gentle shade

* These children had others, who at the present day call themselves *De Gretry*.

of Grétry ; they have smiled a little at the recollection of the *La Rosière*, and of *Collinette*, but who knows if some fine evening, after all their noise, Grétry may not return to reanimate our sweetest smiles.*

Grétry was a musician, poet, philosopher, everybody has said so ; his memoirs have proved it. He wrote in an unceremonious way, in the déshabille of a good citizen of Liège, but with the unaffected spirit of a richly-gifted nature.†

Having grown old, he fancied that he could no longer, as in his brilliant days, write his ideas in music, so he wrote them in bad enough prose. No longer being able to be a poet, he became a philosopher, not a learned one, like Condillac, but dreamy, eloquent, paradoxical, like a disciple of Jean-Jacques and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre. He had not read, he had only loved. In place of seeking knowledge in books, he sought it in himself, invoking his recollections, studying the contradictions of his heart. He wrote three volumes under this terrific title, *On Truth* ; a title which would have terrified Diderot himself, that bold navigator on unknown seas. Grétry, who had all the temerity of ignorance, com-

* Since these pages were written, *Richard Cœur-de-Lion* has been reproduced at the Opera Comique ; and at the present moment this ever-fresh, original, and charming music, gives a poetic pleasure to our musical recollections.

† Although a Fleming, he could say a good thing. David was almost always alongside of him at the Institute. The painter, one day wearied with the discourses which were going on, amused himself with making a sketch of a young negro-girl. "This sketch is to become precious," said Grétry to him. "Do you wish it to become so?" said David ; "then write under it some idea in analogy with your art." Grétry took the pencil and wrote the same moment : "*One white is equal to two blacks.*"

menced with these lines : " Music is a good preparation for all the sentimental sciences ; the exact sciences also, have some connection with the relations existing between sounds." The ancient philosophers actually almost made astronomy a musical science. They said that the stars in heaven are harmoniously calculated sounds. According to Cicero, there is but one harmony, which exists in the universe of which this of sounds is the image. Grétry avows in commencing his book, that he possesses but a limited erudition ; but " I possess an erudition of sensation." He adds : " Without counting the men of no moment, there are two sorts of authors as of artists, the creators and the combiners. This would prove that there is no unity in man ; that he sins by that of which he has too much as by that which he needs ; that he is poor by his riches as by his poverty." He does not stop to say whether he is a creator or a combiner. With him one idea leads to another. He marches on without turning back ; Truth attracts him, and he ever seeks her before him.

A little farther on he narrates the origin of his book. He was walking in the Champs-Élysées when the sight of a group of children, who were playing apparently in a very serious manner, took him by surprise. What was the game ? They were measuring themselves two-by-two by leaning the shoulders of one against the other, all standing on tiptoe and crying, " I, I, am the largest ! " And Grétry said to himself : " These children will grow up, but, nevertheless, they will be all their lives playing the same game ; and this game which occupies them is

that of man in all ages. Yet it is easy to show that man is incessantly striving to rise on tiptoe, hence comes all our evils. We must re-establish the *Truth* in all her splendor. We must incessantly repeat that all without her is disorder; that with her all is for the best, under all moral points of view. Before the Revolution, the self-love of the subjugated man cried to him, *Raise thyself!* Now that he is upright, this same self-love should remind him always to maintain his natural elevation."

But we will not follow Grétry through this strange and confused dream in three volumes octavo. Grétry wrote better in music than in prose. As a poet he was fresh and simple, light, graceful, and spiritual, in a word, charming. As a philosopher he is morose and sententious, ignorant, and no longer simple. However, as the dust of folios did not always tarnish his amiable mind, Grétry has still his happy hours, especially when he puts himself on the stage. Every time that he is content to speak as memory suggests, he throws over his book a final gleam of youth and life which poetically colors these somewhat sombre pages; they might be called the pallid rays of a setting sun. But Grétry, unfortunately choosing to be serious, cost what it may, heaps clouds upon clouds; and if the setting sun shows itself here and there, it is almost in spite of himself.

DIDEROT.

Who would ever dare to undertake to relate the life of Jean-Jacques, or that of Diderot? Both have written their confessions, Diderot with the most frankness, perhaps, because he confessed without wishing to do so.

Buffon, thinking of Diderot and of himself, said, "The style is the man." He told the truth in uttering a paradox. Yes, the character of Diderot is always in his style, as his heart is in his books.

Always sincere, always influenced by his feelings, never by patient reflection, Diderot wrote as he spoke—with enthusiasm. A great poet wanting rhyme, a great historian with the addition of passion, always in the forward ranks of thought, he was yet a great journalist rather than a great writer. It may be said that he took time neither to make his pen nor to open his desk. His desk was everywhere, at Grimm's, at D'Alembert's, at D'Holbach's, on the knees of his dear Sophia.

There it was that he chiefly wrote on everything great or small, on God and on the world, on the arts, and on women. Bold even to insolence,

adventurous even to folly, he always went forward, guided by his generous instincts. scattering with open hands, the Truth which disenchant, the Light which consumes, the Falsehood which consoles.

He was one of the first to paint as he wrote. His rich palette is all tinged with fire and flames. His color is fresh, even in its most delicate shade, especially when he paints women! And how well he knew how to paint them! What a fine, delicate, warm touch! What superb lights, what a delicious background, what a beautiful *genre* picture as well as a portrait! He is at once an historical and an imaginative painter; but the color intoxicated his eye, and blinded him to his faults of drawing.

What constitutes his charm is that feeling, sentiment, poetry, animate each page of his works, whether he is severe or familiar, whether he is writing a discourse or a letter. His style is lively. He does not write, he speaks. He would have invented the whole of Sterne, for he had still more than Sterne, the intellect of the heart. Why had he not the leisure to attempt some elegant verse, for nothing was wanting in him but rhyme? Why did he not sometime awake a Benvenuto Cellini amid his gold and diamonds? So many others have set glass-jewels and chased pinchbeck!

Diderot so far surpassed his brethren in arms that he could, without astonishment, awake at the present day, among ourselves, poets, dreamers, sublime maniacs. Diderot is at once the commencement of Mirabeau, the first cry of the French Revolution, and the last word of all our fine dreams. He was

the true revolutionist. At the tribune of 1789, he would have effaced Mirabeau and Danton; for when he became impassioned in the worship of ideas, he had all the magnificence of the tempest. None of his books can give an idea of his bold and seductive eloquence.

He passed his life in loving and fighting. Saint Simon, Fourier, and George Sand, seem all to have taken their points of divergence from him. In reality this bold and adventurous philosopher, who rose by word and pen against the old society, had thoroughly revolutionary habits. He went from his wife to his mistress, from his mistress to his wife, from his wife to other mistresses. For all this he was none the less a sage, loving virtue, but following all the fancies and all the impulses of his heart. To live according to his heart was, so to speak, the motto of his life. He left the compass to D'Alembert, gallantry to Helvetius, pride to Voltaire, vanity to Grimm, magnificent airs to Buffon, sarcasms to D'Holbach; for his own part he opened his heart and lived happily.

He had the richest nature of the age, both in head and heart. Behold how ideas of all sorts breed tempests in that immense forehead. The other chiefs of the valiant army, which called itself the *Encyclopædia*, were present only to temper his warmth, or profit by his conquest. All, Jean-Jacques himself, are more preoccupied with laurels than with victory. Diderot alone did not think of laurels.

A man worthy of glory for all ages, he nevertheless came in his own proper time. The Deity had marked

him with a fatal seal. The arms which he had seized would have broken in his hands a century sooner or even a century later.

He was the true philosopher of the eighteenth century. He alone utters tones worthy of Leibnitz or Malebranche. While Montesquieu and Raynal were studying politics, Voltaire the philosophers, without studying himself enough, Condillae psychology, D'Alembert geometry, Buffon the pomp of ideas rather than ideas, D'Holbach chemistry, Diderot rose higher—he dared to create an entire world. Jean-Jacques alone, by his sublime reveries, approaches him on these precipitous heights. I have said that Diderot dared to create. It would be more just to say that he dared to destroy. His work is actually one of destruction, but not a sterile work. After the mournful harvest of prejudice, the good seed may be sown.

Ideas are birds of passage which traverse the world, carried along by a fragrant breeze, or chased by storms. Sometimes the bird of passage is an eagle, who is to strike with his unseen wing the forehead of a philosopher or a hero. Sometimes it is a light swallow who shakes over poets and lovers, his wings steeped in the dew of the meadows. Diderot saw the flight of the eagle and the swallow. The great wing struck his forehead, the drop of dew fell upon his heart.

The eagle had passed over him on a stormy day, as over Voltaire, over Jean-Jacques, over all men in advance of their age.

If we seek the origin of this fervid thought, which under the name of Voltaire, Jean-Jacques, and

Diderot, made of old monarchical France, bigoted and ruined, a new country, which will be free, strong, and rich, we must ask Vanini and Campanella. Italy was the supreme mother before France. In the same century she nursed at her teeming bosom all the great poets and all the great artists. Human thought has also come to us from that enchanted land. Is not Vanini, that witty cynic, who was the first to doubt and to scoff, who scattered truth by his biting speech, the beginning of Voltaire? And is not Campanella, that bold soul, that daring spirit, the precursor of Diderot? But why should we search elsewhere than in our own land for the fountain which, by degrees, has become a rivulet, a brook, a river, to fertilize liberated France? Have not Abelard and Montaigne, Descartes and Rabelais, caused the waters of health to leap from the rock? Fenelon, that pantheist of such pious melancholy, who dreamed of a Calypso's island for his Eden, was a brother of Diderot as Bayle was of Voltaire.

A light surrounded by darkness is all which the mind can attain here below. We go forward, we seek with a bold eye; a luminous point strikes it, and we exclaim, "Behold the truth!" We still press forward, completely dazzled, the heart beating, the soul in the eyes. Suddenly the darkness becomes more black, we have made a step, but we remain on the road. We are in despair, another ray shoots across; we still wish to follow, but it seems the sport of him who knows all things. We soon gasp for breath in this rugged land, and retrace our steps to the point of departure where it is written, "The sun of the mind shall not rise for thee."

Diderot walked without fear in the darkness. He went far, but why did he say on his return, "Beyond the visible path there is nothing?" The philosophy of the eighteenth century was wanting in grandeur and poetry. Its reason fastens us to the earth, and limits the horizon; its enthusiasm never elevates us up to the sacred region, in which the soul expands at the breath of God. But what philosophy, except that of Christ, is worthy to guide humanity? That alone is the philosophy of the heart and of the mind. It is Heaven smiling upon weeping earth; it is the horizon over which rises the Divine Light; it is the science of life—Love: it is the science of death—Hope!

To avail myself of the parable of the evangelists, the earth, this field of God, in which his bountiful hand has sown the good seed, Love, Charity, and Hope, was faithless to its Master. The tares sprung up among the good seed—the tares, that is to say, ambition, vanity, contention. The good seed was near being choked in the field, without air and without sunshine, when Christ came and said to it, "Rise up, I will sustain you against the tares; and in the time of harvest, I will gather you, while the gleaners shall cast the tares into the fire." Thus was it that Christ came and spake to him who needed the air and sunshine, to Lazarus. What did he say to her who needed the Divine Love, to the Magdalen? Weary with his journey, he was resting on a stone in a city of Samaria; it was at the sixth hour: a woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said unto her, "Give me to drink. Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whoso-

ever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst : but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." And the Savior dropped on the withered heart of the Magdalen a drop of the living water of Divine Love, and the Magdalen was delivered from the impure chains of sensuality. Her arms which had embraced none other than the devil, were now stretched out to God. Christ had protected and raised Lazarus. He pardoned the Magdalen, and reopened heaven unto her. Every step he took forced back the demon of evil ; each word which he spoke proclaimed Divine justice ; and in his footsteps Love, the earnest of heaven, the fair lily which bloomed from a smile and a tear of the Divinity, flourished again on this condemned world as in its first days.

Did not the philosophy of the eighteenth century then comprehend, that before its time a God had come on a pilgrimage here below, to speak of Love to humanity in a nobler language than that of the *Encyclopedia*.

The philosophy of Diderot, however, was that of Plato. According to Plato, God gave us two wings to rise unto him — love and reason. Are we not, according to Diderot, to pass through life with these two wings ? Voltaire, less tender and less pensive, placed reason before love.

Diderot was the most impassioned of the combatants in this ardent army of philosophers, who, about 1760, agitated so noisily, who demanded entire liberty — liberty of thought and of pen — liberty before the king, liberty before God. Diderot reached

the extreme limit at a single bound, but his enthusiasm often misled him. He had too much of the artist for a philosopher. The head took the lead, but the heart suddenly followed the head, and soon outstripped it. Even in thinking, he allowed himself to be carried away by revery. His power consists in his boldness, which surprised those most inured to battle. It is his disorderly impetuosity which has all the majesty of the storm.

D'Alembert might be painted with compass in hand, between Diderot and Voltaire, appeasing the impetuosity of the one and tempering the passion of the other.

Voltaire had the impetuosity of caprice, of anger, of vengeance; the lightning cleft the cloud, the storm was expected, but the sky soon became serene.

As a striking contrast, represent to yourselves D'Alembert, timid and discreet, not daring to utter his thought, scarcely daring to write it in the solitude of his study. Fontenelle, who had his hands by no means full of truths, took good care not to open them. D'Alembert, an expanded echo of Fontenelle, disseminated but the quarter of the truth. Diderot would have rather disseminated an error than retained a truth in the hollow of his hand. We may compare D'Alembert again to Montesquieu; we find the same calmness and quiet. The *Géomètre-orateur* of Gilbert is more a portrait than a satire. A man ever temperate, even in days of conflict, he is the genius of patience; he places Reason on the shell of the tortoise.—“Reason must never take the bit in her teeth; if she only progresses that is sufficient.”

Diderot was a rigorous pantheist, loving God, and

saying that the earth was an altar illumined by Heaven. Proud as a freeman, who carries with him the memory of his good actions, he went on without fear and without turning aside, saying that of the dastardly and the guilty none should follow him.

Strange being! God had given him everything--enthusiasm, poetry, thoughts which flashed from his mind like darts of lightning, sentiments which bloomed in his heart like lilies upon the shores of the river of life! It is Man made in the image of God! The body was worthy of such a soul; grace accompanied might; nothing was wanting to such a creature, nothing, unless it was God himself! The prodigal son had fled from the paternal mansion, without retaining a recollection, a pious recollection for the benefit of his evil days!

But why accuse him of atheism? Atheist! is not loving here below, loving God on high? Diderot loved all his life the works of God. A man gifted like himself might, in his hours of doubt, fall into the errors of a materialism without danger, because he animated matter with all his poetry. For him, matter had a soul; he said with children: "God is everywhere; on earth as in heaven."—He never denied the divinity; he only formed of it a changing image. His Deity appeared to him under diverse metamorphoses. He saw him especially under the form of a beautiful woman, still pure, already loving, her feet on earth, her look raised to the sky. Sometimes he seemed to hear him in the thousand voices of the deep forest. He had not, like Cabanis, the fault of wanting to explain everything. That was the error of science, and Diderot did not assume the er-

rors of a savant. He disavowed the impure materialism of La Mettrie. He had decked an altar to public morality and private virtue. He loved his family; he spoke with emotion of his old father, the cutler of Langres; he wept at the thought of his daughter. If he had his heart open to all passions, good and fatal, he also had a heart open to all charities. He did not sing of Nature, the work of God, like all the poets and philosophers of his time, but he loved it. No one had in so high a degree the profound feeling of universal life. This man, who knew so much, who knew everything except the beginning and the end, was surprised, astonished like a child, at the sight of the woods which thought and moved, of the waters which flowed on for ever, of the harvest which each year regilded the earth. He plucked an ear of wheat and a flower; he looked toward heaven; he interrogated his heart.—“What are you about, my friend, Diderot?” asked Grimm one day, when the philosopher stood thinking in the open country.—“I am listening,” he replied.—“Who is speaking to you?”—“God.”—“Well?”—“It is Hebrew: the heart understands, but the mind is not placed high enough.”

One evening all the philosophers were awaiting supper at Helvetius'. They returned as ever to that famous question, “What is the soul?” When each one had gayly or gravely uttered some fine-sounding falsehood, Helvetius stamped with his foot to obtain a little silence. He went and closed the window.—“Night has come on; bring me some fire.”—A brazier of charcoal was brought in; he took the tongs, went to a candle-bracket, and blew upon the coal; a

candle was lighted.—“Take away this god,” said he, showing the coal; “I have the soul, the life of the first man! Now the fire which has answered my purpose is to be found everywhere—in the stone, in the wood, in the atmosphere. The soul is the fire, and the fire is the life. The creation of the world is an hypothesis much more marvellous than that which I have sought to explain to you.”—With these words, Helvetius lit a second candle.—“You see that my first man has transmitted life without the aid of a god!”—“You do not see,” said Diderot then to him, “that you have proved the existence of God in seeking to deny it; for I know very well that life is on the earth, but still there must needs have been some one to have lighted the fire. I fancy that the charcoal would not have lit itself.”

Diderot never denied God, for he saw him everywhere; at the most, he doubted: now, as some one has said, “To doubt is still to believe.”

But how can we study him, with his thousand contradictions? As a man of sincerity, in his life, as in his works, he contradicted himself every day and on every page.

Diderot is one of the great figures which shine out predominantly in the picture of an age. He holds an elevated place as an artist and philosopher in the history of the arts and of ideas. His memory possesses an indescribable grandeur and charm. He is the genius of paradox, the heroism of audacity and of passion. He carries the eighteenth century on his shoulders, as the Atlas of old carried the heavens! No one thinks of raising a statue to him, but has he not a temple—an eternal temple, although already

ruined, the *Encyclopedia*, whence issued the revolution, completely armed?

The ruins of the *Encyclopedia* will be piously admired in future time, like the sacred fragments of the Parthenon. When the architect is a great artist, the temple survives the god who was worshipped in it. The philosophy of Diderot has fallen from the altar; but his temple will never be thrown down!

BOUCHER.

IN the history of painting in France, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, we find two schools, or rather two families of painters, springing up almost simultaneously, and holding alternate sway. The one, grand and forcible, drawing the sources of its life from the holy inspiration of God and of Nature, which still adorns human beauty with memorials of heaven, and with the splendor of the ideal; the other graceful and coquettish, which does not look for inspiration, which contents itself with being pretty, with smiling, and even charming at the expense of truth and grandeur. The object of its search is not the pure and simple beauty which is radiant with the sentiment of divinity, it seeks only to attract. The first exhibits Art in all her splendor, the second is but the falsehood of Art. In the seventeenth century, Poussin and Mignard were at the head of these two families of art, as I have called them. The one has the beauty of force and simplicity, the other that of grace and cleverness. This striking contrast was reproduced, in a feebler form, in the eighteenth century, by the Vanloos and Bou-

chers. The Vanloos, though they did not await the hour of inspiration, though they could not rise high enough to grasp the supreme beauty, set out with the noble ardor of Poussin, and reached only theatrical display; they stopped half way in their journey, but they at least preserved a remembrance of their point of departure. When the power was at default, the aim saved the work. We can not forget those natural artists who brought from Flanders the freshness of their fields. Despite their noble efforts, serious art soon expired, overcome by the profane school of Watteau. Watteau, who reigned during the regency, gave, so to speak, the color to his time. The painter, however, who most faithfully represents art in the eighteenth century, is Boucher. Is it not curious to study in Boucher, the caprice which holds sovereign sway, without reverence for the past, and without regard for the future? Boucher, whatever may be the contempt of some, or the pity of others, will always hold a place in the history of Art. We can not reject this painter, who reigned for forty years, overwhelmed with fame and fortune—this painter, protesting in his unrestrained freedom against the recognised masters, opening a school fatal to all that is noble, grand, and beautiful, and yet not devoid of a certain coquettish grace, a certain magic of color, and, finally, a certain charm before unknown. David, who was his pupil, always recalls, amid his statuesque Romans, the smiling faces of Boucher. Girodet himself, who sought for grandeur and sentiment in simplicity, never disdained this painter. He solicitously collected all his designs, he lingered over them as over

the recollections of the wildness of youth. "We have grown old while surrounded by this graceful exhibition of court shepherdesses. Shall we be able to recover ourselves again? These are faithless mistresses, long forgotten, who again present themselves to us when we are wearied by the tiresome monotony of marriage." It is esteemed good taste to condemn Boucher—we thus gain the credit of being good and moral judges, but the honest critic will recognise Boucher as the historian does Louis XV.

Mignard was the first in France to allow himself to be seduced by the false attractions of that worldly grace which proscribes art. Art only admits the deception which is styled the ideal; that is to say, all that ennobles, elevates, and poetizes the truth. Having to take the portraits of the ladies of the court, Mignard did not paint them as they were, but as they wished to be. Hence those smiles not of earth which enchant us, hence those looks raised to heaven, but still moist with pleasure. We understand how he became the most admired of all portrait-painters; he was false to truth, everybody knew it, his models as well as himself; but no one was so ill-advised as to reproach him for his gallantry. There was not one of his duchesses who did not proclaim her likeness a striking one. The false painters are the painters of women. He thus, not only amassed a splendid fortune, but formed a school, a charming and dangerous school, which became extinct only through its abuse of falsehood. Watteau followed the steps of Mignard, but with a more piquant and delicate charm. Mignard had spoiled or adorned, whichever you please, the great ladies of the court;

Watteau took up the actresses, the citizens' families, the peasant-girls. It would be impossible to say how many charming and gay masquerade scenes he has painted in the wantonness of art. Another falsifier appeared, Lemoine by name; he perpetrated more serious falsehoods of a mythological character. His most serious and most remarkable production was Francis Boucher, his pupil, the falsifier *par excellence*, the most faithful portrait of his time.

Lemoine had studied more especially in the school of Rubens. Like that great master he had sacrificed correctness of drawing to splendor of color. The ceiling of the Chapel of the Virgin, and the Saloon of Hercules, at Versailles, form his principal works. Certainly, judging by these, he was an artist not devoid of force and grace. He, however, at once plunged into bad taste, in seeking richness rather than force, magical effect rather than beauty.

Lafosse, Jouvenet, Lemoine, Coypel, and De Troy, were then masters of the prevailing school. Watteau, who, in truth, was more of an artist than all of them put together, passed in their eyes merely for a decorative painter of the opera. He was, however, more truthful in his charming falsehoods than all those masters who got hold of truth by the wrong end. Since the death of Lesueur, France had been waiting for a great painter. Lebrun had attracted the attention which was turned aside from Poussin and Lesueur, whose sublime power was not recognised. Study in art was conducted as chance determined, sometimes at Rome after Carlo Maratti and Albano, who were taken for great painters, sometimes at Paris after Lebrun and Mignard, who were thought

greater than Poussin and Lesueur. In 1750, prior to the critiques of Diderot, the Marquis d'Argens, who was a man of talent, declared, judging according to the prevailing opinions of his day, that Mignard equalled Correggio; Lebrun, Michael Angelo; and Lemoine, Rubens.

After the death of Mignard and Lebrun, Lemoine took the first place; he was more worthy of it than the De Troys and the Coypels. He was the only one who left a pupil of recognised ability, Francis Boucher, of whom the Marquis d'Argens thus speaks: "A universal genius, who unites in himself the talents of Veronese and of Gaspar, copying from Nature her most charming grace."

Boucher was born at the same time that Bossuet died. Some few vestiges only of the great reign were left. Fontenelle alone (that presentiment of the eighteenth century) was standing, in the proportions of a dwarf, on the tombs of Corneille, of Poussin, of Molière, of Lesueur, and of La Fontaine. France was exhausted by her magnificent births; the sacred breasts of the mother-country were almost dried up when Boucher's lips were applied to them. Who, however, would believe that Boucher was one of the most forcible expressions of an entire century? But really, was not the eighteenth century, for fifty years, like Boucher, full of folly, treating everything with a laugh, passing from caprice to scoffing, delighting itself in petty deceits, replacing art by artifice, living from day to day without memory, without hope, disdaining force for grace, dazzling others as well as itself by his factitious colors? When poetry and taste so readily went astray, with the Abbé de Voisenon

and Gentil-Bernard, who will be surprised that painting should have trifled with the pencil of Boucher?

We see at the first glance at one of his pictures, that he dwelt among stones, and not in the fields. He never took time to look at either the sky or a river, a meadow or a forest; it might even be doubted whether he ever saw a man but through a prism, or whether he ever saw a woman or child such as God made them. Boucher painted a new world, the world of fairies, where every one is moved, every one loves and smiles after a fashion quite different from that of this world. He is an enchanter who distracts and dazzles us at the expense of reason, taste, and art; he reminds us somewhat of this line of Bernis, a poet worthy such a painter:—

By dint of Art, Art's self is banished.

There had been painters before of the name and family of Boucher; one among others who left some wonderful designs in red chalk of mythological subjects. He was Mignard's master; Mignard gave lessons to Lemoine; Lemoine to Boucher; so that the painter was enabled thus to receive traditionally lessons from his great-grandfather. Unfortunately, he had the perversity to receive nothing from tradition but the falsities of Mignard and Lemoine.

Boucher never possessed the enthusiasm of an earnest artist. He became a painter as unceremoniously as he would have made himself a journalist. It was during those fine times when Voisenon turned priest while writing operas. Every one wanted faith, in the arts, in literature, at the foot of the altar, even on the throne. Did Louis XV. himself

believe in royalty? But how can we find fault with Boucher? Would he not have been overwhelmed with ridicule if he had been an artist in all seriousness, studying with patience, growing pale with aspirations after greatness. He preferred being of his age, of his day and generation. He commenced like a youth, throwing to the first wind that blew, all the roses of his twenty years. He had two studios: one was that of Lemoine; the other and principal one was the opera. Was not that Boucher's true theatre? Was it not at the opera that he found his landscapes and his portraits? Opera-landscapes, opera-personages, form pretty much the whole of Boucher! The two studios formed a singular contrast; in the first was Lemoine, grave, sad, devoured with pride and envy, discontented with everything, with his pupils and himself; in the second was the whole laughing retinue of human follies; gold and silk, wit and pleasure, the lips smiling, and the petticoat flying in the wind. It was in those fine times when Camargo found that her skirts were too long for the dance. In order to get a nearer view of all these wonders, Boucher asked the favor of painting a decoration. He picked up the sparkling pencil of Watteau, to paint in bold outline the nymphs and naiads. Carl Vanloo joined him; in a little while, they made themselves masters of all the decorations and the *es-paliers* (such was the appellation of the figurantes of the time).

There was then flourishing in society, and out of it, a circle of wits, like the Count de Caylus, Duclos, Pont-de-Veyle, Maurepas, Monterif; Voisenon, and Crébillon the Gay, Collé, and certain prodigal sons

of good citizens, had the entrée, thanks to their wit or their gayety. They wrote couplets on all sorts of things, and tirades in the form of a gazette, which circulated about the court and city; burlesque scenes, which were played in the saloons and in the open air; licentious stories, which passed from mouth to mouth, like the last bit of current news. It was the literature of the opera. Boucher was, therefore, received with favor into the society of *these gentlemen*, for such was the name they took. At a later day, D'Alembert delivered a somewhat severe judgment on the works of *these gentlemen*, by calling their joint productions, "a drunken surfeit, rather than a gay debauch of wit." Duclos, the representative of this academy of bad taste, was thus portrayed by Madame de Rochfort; she is referring to the passions of the heart; she is speaking of that paradise which each one made for himself in this world, according to his own notion: "As for you, Duclos, the material for yours, when you are amorous, is the first woman that comes along."—This portrait may be taken for Boucher, and for all the members of that circle.

In lieu of following, step by step, a biography, embroidered everywhere with adventures of gallantry, I prefer to relate an adventure which displays Boucher, at the best period of his life, seeking for art and love in truth, fleeing from them as soon as found, to fall again still deeper into falsities of art and of love. No! I will not recount to you all Boucher's follies at the opera; those bursts of licentious gayety, in which the heart had no part. It is a wornout theme: all the writers of memoirs have trudged over the road, which is a sufficient reason for my turning from it.

Of what use is it, besides, to evoke the shades of those amours without house or home, faith or law, which shoot forth only blunted arrows? Let us, therefore, follow Boucher during those rare moments when his heart was in play, when his talent became almost severe. It is good to be young and to laugh, but what is there more sad than a man who is always laughing?

Boucher soon became disgusted with the opera; with those sham pictures, which he produced as if by magic, to decorate the *Castor and Pollux* of Rameau and Gentil-Bernard; with the sham love, in which he culled faded roses without thorns; he did not know the value of the thorn which guards a rose! those sham paintings and sham loves had bewildered, dazzled, and enchanted him, as long as the white hand of youth scattered primroses along his path. The most luxuriant and most prodigal youth, however, is that which is the soonest exhausted. Boucher awoke one morning, sad and disenchanting, without knowing why. He at last understood that he had until then profaned his heart and art, and that he had thus lost all the glorious morn of life. He still raised his head with some remnant of natural pride.—“It is always time to do well,” said he one morning to his master, whose lessons he attended only at distant intervals. He made a studio of his boudoir; he retouched all the gallant sketches that he had hanging on all sides. *Love the Bird-Catcher, Love the Reaper, Love the Vintager*; you can imagine the whole of that gay and sparkling poem, where Love has no time for sighing. He closed his *Mythology*, which he had consulted a thousand times; he bought a bible, but though he

had read the *Mythology* with fervor, he could scarce summon energy to turn over the leaves of the Bible, and cast here and there a careless glance. Unfortunately for him he had the *Mythology* by heart: Cupid concealed the form of the infant Christ, loves concealed the angels, the nymphs of Venus, the seraphs of Paradise. He was not, however, discouraged at the first attempt. He persisted in turning over the Book of books, he saw Rachel at the well; ill-fated man, he was reminded of Venus at the bath. He closed the Bible, saying to himself that to get the painted beauties of the opera out of one's head, it was only needful to see some natural faces; but where to find them at that time, unless he should look for them in the cradle? Who knows? Labor is a wonderful preserver. Perhaps, by descending among the people, he might discover some angelic face, that the spirit, or rather the demon of the age, had left untouched, a face worthy of conveying to him an idea of the majestic simplicity of the Bible. Boncher, therefore, sought inspiration in the open air, resolved to traverse the great city everywhere, resolved even to go, if necessary, to study in the open country, under the sun in the meadow, or in the shadow of some holy village-church. For more than three weeks he lived by himself. He ended by freeing himself little by little, shred by shred, from the deeply-impressed recollections of the opera. "What are you about?" the Count de Caylus asked him one day. "Doing penance," he replied with an abstracted air.

The will is the sovereign mistress of the world. A man of good resolution can conquer everything;

it is a rough virtue, an unhopèd-for glory—it is genius itself, that endless ladder which the Deity allows to descend at intervals to join earth to heaven, breaking it asunder when man mounts too quickly or too slowly. By dint of will, who would believe it? Boucher threw a veil over his past life, broke the deceitful prisms which blinded him regarding this world, discovered another horizon, another source of light. A young girl in his neighborhood, whom he had until then scarcely remarked, so frivolous and insipid had her sublime purity seemed to him, suddenly struck him as beaming with supreme beauty.

His studio, or rather boudoir, was in the Rue Richelieu. Not far from it, in the Rue St. Anne, he passed almost every day the shop of a fruiterer. He often saw a young girl on the door-step without being much struck by her, although she was beautiful, simple, and touching. Seduced by the studied graces of Camargo, could he be sensible of the charms of so gentle and chaste a beauty? One day, after three weeks of austere solitude, he stopped astonished before the fruit-shop. It was when cherries were in season. Baskets of the freshly-gathered fruit tempted the passers-by with their charming hues; a garniture of leaves half concealed the fruit which was not quite ripe. But it was not for the cherries that Boucher stopped. As he passed, the fruiterer's daughter, with bare arms and loosely flowing hair, was serving a neighbor. You should have seen her take the cherries in her delicate hand, put them, without any other measure, into the lap of her customer, and give a divine smile in return for the four

sous she received in payment. The painter would have given four louis for the cherries, for the hand which served them, and above all for the divine smile. When the customer had gone, he advanced some steps without knowing what he was going to say. He was a perfect master in the art of gallantry. There was not a woman that he did not know how to attack on her weak side, face to face, sidewise, or by turning his back on her. He had been at a good school. He had long since said to himself, like Danton at a later period, "Courage, courage, always courage." He was right. Are you not sure of vanquishing a woman by treating her as an enemy? How happened it, however, that Boucher on that day lost all his force and courage, at the sight of this simple and feeble young girl? Is it because strength is roused only by strength? The serpent who ruined Eve, surprised her in her weakness only because the spirit of evil did not yet understand women.

Boucher, who had advanced resolutely like a man who is sure of his object, crossed the threshold of the fruiterer, all pale and trembling, and very much at a loss what to say. The young girl regarded him with so much serenity and calmness, that he somewhat recovered his presence of mind. He asked for cherries, and soon rallying himself, begged the young girl to allow him to sketch her beautiful face. She made no answer. The mother entered. As Boucher was a man of fine address, and the mother a coquette on the wane, he succeeded in obtaining her consent to take the portrait at his leisure. She brought her daughter the next day to the painter's studio. Boucher did not detain the mother. He

made the daughter take her seat on a sofa, sharpened his pencil, and set to work with great joy.

Rosina possessed that description of beauty, which is ignorant of its own attractions, which touches rather than seduces. Her regular profile called up pleasant recollections of the antique lines of beauty. She was a brunette, but her locks reflected in the light those beautiful golden tints which charmed Titian. Her eyes were of an undecided hue, like the sky during some autumn twilights; her mouth, somewhat large, perhaps, had a divine expression of candor, an expression which Rosina spoiled in speaking, said Boucher, "rather by her words than by the motion of her lips. Thus the sweetest hours which I passed with her, were the most silent. I always liked what she was about to say, and scarcely ever what she did say."

The artist had been attracted before the man. Boucher had begun by seeing in her a divine model; but, all-engrossed as he was by his art, he soon ended by regarding Rosina only as a woman. His heart, which had never had time to love in the crowd of the more than profane passions of the opera, felt that it was not barren. The flowers of love sprang up under the flames of voluptuousness. Boucher became enamored of Rosina, not like a man who makes a sport of love, but like a poet who loves with tears in his eyes: a tender love, pure and worthy of that heaven to which it rises, and whence it has descended. Rosina loved Boucher. How could she help loving him who gave her double assurance of her beauty, both by his lips and by his skill, for Rosina did not truly realize that she was beautiful

until she beheld the head of the virgin, which the poet had designed after that of the young girl. What was the result? You can guess. They loved one another: they told one another so. One day, after glances far too tender, the pencil fell from the artist's hand, the young girl cast her eyes down... "Ah! poor Rosina," exclaimed Diderot, meditating over the matter at a later period, "why were you not selling cherries on that day!"

The virgin, which was to be the master-piece of Boucher, was not finished. The face was beautiful, but the painter had not yet been able to shed over it the divine sentiment which constitutes the charm of such a work. He hoped, he despaired, he meditated and gazed at Rosina; in a word he was, at that fatal barrier, the barrier of genius, where all talent which is not genius must pause, and which, now and then, some who have the courage to make the attempt may perchance succeed in surmounting. His love for art, or for Rosina, had not been able to raise Boucher beyond this. His biblical feeling had not detached him from this lower world; while adoring the virgin Mary in Rosina, he also, profane man, adored a new mistress. His conversion was not sincere. He hesitated between the divine love which looks to the future, and the terrestrial love which regards the past; between that severe form of art which affects by its sublimity, and that pleasing form which charms by its grace. He had advanced thus far when a new personage appeared to change the current of his thoughts.

It was fifteen days since Rosina had commenced her sittings. It was but two since, at a glance from

the young girl, the painter had dropped his pencil. It was about eleven o'clock in the morning, Boucher was preparing his palette, Rosina loosening her hair. There was a ring at the door of the studio. Rosina went and opened it, as if she had belonged to the house. "Monsieur Boucher?" inquired a young girl, who blushing crossed the threshold. "What can I do for you?" said Boucher, glancing at the reflection of the young girl in a mirror. He approached to meet her. "Monsieur Boucher, I am a poor girl without bread. If my mother was not sick and destitute of everything, I could succeed in gaining a livelihood by my needle; but for the sake of my mother, I have resigned myself to becoming a model. I have been told that I have a pretty hand and a passable face. Look, monsieur, do you think that I would do for a model?"

The stranger uttered all this with an air of vague anxiety; but what especially struck the painter while she was speaking, was her coquettish and seductive beauty. Farewell to the Bible, farewell to Rosina, farewell to all simple and sublime love. The new-comer appeared to Boucher as the embodiment of all his previous reveries. It was this very Muse, less beautiful than pretty, less striking than graceful, that he had so ardently sought for. There was something in her face which belonged partly to heaven and partly to the opera, a trace of divinity such as might be found in a fallen angel, something which acts upon the heart and the lips at the same time, in fine, a certain something which I can not describe, which charms and intoxicates without elevating the soul to the splendors of lofty meditation. She was

dressed as a poor girl, which contrasted somewhat with the delicacy of her features and movements. Boucher, although no bad physiognomist, did not discover any art or study in this beauty, she masked both by an air of lofty innocence. He allowed himself to be captivated. Who will be astonished at it who recollects that he fancied that he had found nature in the studio of Lamoine or at the opera? Rosina was his first serious lesson—it was Nature in all her true and simple majesty. But the instincts of the painter, deceptive and vitiated, could not rise to its height. On beholding the face of the stranger, he seemed to see the face of an acquaintance, a face which he had seen in another country, or in another world. He therefore, notwithstanding her mean attire, received her as a friend. “How, mademoiselle,” said he to her, with an admiring look; “You say that you are tolerably beautiful? Say rather, intensely.” — “Not at all,” said she, with the sweetest smile in the world. “Really, mademoiselle, you have come most opportunely. I was in search of a beautiful expression for the head of the Virgin; perhaps I shall find it in yours. Incline your head a little on your bosom. Put your hand on this arm-chair. Rosina draw aside the red curtain.”

Boucher did not notice the tearful glance cast on him by the young girl. She silently obeyed, while she asked herself if she was no longer fit for anything but to draw the curtain. She went and sat down in a corner of the studio, to observe at her ease, and without being seen, her who had come to disturb her happiness. But scarce was she seated on the divan, when Boucher, who liked solitude with

two, recommended her to return to her mother, at the same time enjoining upon her to come early the next day. She went without saying a word, with death at her heart, foreseeing that she would be forgotten for her who remained tête-à-tête with her lover. She dried her tears at the foot of the staircase. "Alas! what will my mother say when she sees me so sad?" She walked about the streets to give her sadness time to disappear. "Besides," she continued, "by waiting a little I shall see her come out. I shall be able to discover what is passing in her heart."

She waited. More than an hour passed away. The model was sitting in good earnest. Boucher spoiled his beautiful Virgin, to the fullness of his bent, by endeavoring to unite in it two styles of character. The stranger at last came out with an embarrassed air, as if she had committed a bad action. It had rained in the morning, and the street was almost impracticable for pretty feet. She slipped along as light as a cat in the direction of the Palais Royal. She stopped at a house of poor appearance, gave a crown to the porter, cast her eyes about her suspiciously, and disappeared within the portal. Rosina had followed her. On seeing her disappear, she examined the house, and, not daring to push her curiosity any further, resolved also to return home. An invisible hand, however, retained her in spite of herself. She must needs spy at all the windows of the house. She had a presentiment that she should see the unknown one again. All of a sudden, to her great surprise, she fancied that she recognised her in some one who was going out in an entirely different

costume. This time the young girl was dressed as a fine lady, in a taffeta robe, with a train, the end of which she strove to thrust into her pocket, a mantilla, red heels, all the accessories. "Where can she be going in that dress?" Rosina asked herself, as she followed her almost step by step. The lady went straight to a gilded carriage, which was waiting for her before the Palais Royal. A lackey rushed before her to open the door. She quickly stepped into the carriage with the air of one accustomed to do so every day. "I suspected it," muttered Rosina; "there was an indescribable something in her manner, her mode of speech, the softened pride of her glance, which surprised me. There is no use for her to assume all sorts of masks, she will be found out in the end. Alas! I wonder if he found her out!"

The next day Rosina, purposely, came a little late. He did not utter, however, on seeing her that sweet phrase which consoles the absent for absence, whether from hearth or heart: "I was waiting for you."—"Well," said she, after a pause, "you say nothing to me about your fine lady."—"My fine lady! I do not understand."—"So you did not find her out? She was not a poor girl, as she said, but a fine lady who has not much to do. I saw her get into her carriage. Oh! such a carriage, such horses, such a footman!"—"What do you say! You are trying to deceive me: it is a falsehood."—"It is the truth. Now do you believe in those fine airs of innocence?"—"What a singular adventure!" said Boucher, passing his hand over his forehead: "will she come back?" At this moment Rosina went and rested her joined hands on the painter's shoulder.

"She did not ask you for anything?" said she, with a mournful, but charming expression. Boucher kissed the forehead of his mistress as it was bent over him. "Nothing except a crown as the price of the sitting: it is an enigma: I can not make it out."—"Alas, she will return."—"Who knows? she was to do so this morning."—"I shall take good care to-day not to open the door."—"Why not? what folly! Are you beginning to be jealous?"—"You are very cruel! Will *you* open the door yourself?"—"Yes." Rosina drew back with a sigh. "Then," said she, with tears in her eyes, "the door shall close on me."

Rosina, weeping with love and jealousy, was of adorable beauty; but Boucher, unfortunately for himself, thought only of the mysterious stranger. "Rosina, you don't know what you are saying; you are foolish." Boucher had spoken somewhat harshly: the poor girl went toward the door, and in a feeble voice murmured a sad farewell. She, doubtless, hoped that he would not let her go, that he would catch her in his arms, and console her with a kiss; but he did nothing of the kind: he forgot, the ingrate, that Rosina was not an opera-girl: he thought that she was *making believe*, like all the actresses, without heart or faith. Rosina did not make believe, she listened to her naïve and simple nature; she had given all which she could give, more than her heart, than her soul; it was not surprising that she should revolt at being loved so lightly, as if by mere chance. She opened the door, turned toward Boucher; a single tender look would have brought her to his feet; he contented himself with saying to her, as he would to the first chance-comer, "Don't

put on so many airs." These words made Rosina indignant. "It is all over!" said she. At the same moment she closed the door. The sound of her steps went to Boucher's heart. He would have rushed to the stairs, but he stopped himself with the idea that she would come back. Another would have done so, Rosina did not. With her Boucher lost all hope of real talent. Truth had visited him in all her force, her sublimity, and her beauty. He could not rise to her level. He set to work to search out the mysterious personage who so poetically personified his Muse.

In vain did he ransack the fashionable world, in company with Pont-de-Veyle and the Count de Caylus. He was at all the fêtes and amusements, at all the promenades and all the suppers: but he could not find her whom he sought with such infatuated ardor. Rosina was not completely banished from his mind; but the poor girl never appeared by herself in his reminiscences, he always beheld her image by the side of that of the unknown lady. One day, however, as he was looking at his unfinished *Virgin*, he felt that Rosina was still in his heart. He reproached himself for having abandoned her. He resolved to go forthwith and tell her that he loved and always had loved her. He went down stairs, and turned toward the Rue St. Anne, making his way through a crowd of carriages and hacks. A young girl passed along the other side of the street, with a basket in her hand. He recognised Rosina. Alas! it was but the shadow of Rosina; grief had made sad havoc with her charms; desertion had crushed her with its icy hand. He was about crossing the

street, to join her, when a carriage passing prevented his doing so. A woman put her head out of the window.—“It is she!” he exclaimed, completely overcome. He forgot Rosina, and followed the carriage, ready for whatever might happen. The carriage led him to a mansion in the Rue St. Dominique. The painter boldly presented himself half an hour afterward. He was received by the husband with every mark of attention.—“I think, Monsieur Count, that I have heard it said that Madame the Countess would not disdain to have her portrait taken by my pencil.”—“She has not said a word about it to me; but I will conduct you to her oratory.”—Bold as he was, Boucher almost wished himself home again; but, as it was as embarrassing to beat a retreat without any apparent reason, as to face the danger, he suffered himself to be led to the oratory.

It was she, the poor girl without bread. She told Boucher that curiosity, combined with a little ennui, had led her to his studio, to obtain an opinion on her beauty, once for all, by a competent judge, who would have no reason for telling an untruth.—“I once paid you for a sitting,” said Boucher, passionately, “it is now your turn to pay me for one.”—It was decided that he should take the countess’s portrait; it was never brought to completion, so much delight did Boucher take in his task.

After the intoxication of this passion was abated, the young girl whom he had forsaken returned to Boucher’s mind. On looking at his *Virgin*, in which the profane artist had mingled his impressions of the two beauties, he saw clearly that Rosina was the most beautiful. The countess had enticed him

with the greatest power, but the charm was dispelled. He again discovered that Rosina possessed that ideal beauty which ravishes lovers and gives genius to painters.—“Yes,” said he, regretfully, “I deceived myself like a child! the divine and human beauty, the true light, the heavenly sentiment, belonged to Rosina; the seductiveness, the falsehood, that expression which comes neither from the heart nor from Heaven the countess possessed. I spoilt my *Virgin*, like a fool; but there is still time.”—There was not! He ran to the fruiterer’s; he asked for Rosina.—“She is dead,” said her mother to him.—“Dead!” exclaimed Boucher, pale with despair.—“Yes, Monsieur Artist. She died as those who die at sixteen, of love. I only speak from hearsay; but she acknowledged to an aunt, who watched by her in her last moments, that she was dying of a broken heart, from having loved too much! By the way, you forgot to take my portrait. Hers, too? I have not thought any more about it.”—“It is not finished,” said the painter, gasping for breath.

Returning to his studio, he abandoned himself to grief; he threw himself on his knees before the unfinished *Virgin*; he cursed the fatal passion which had drawn him away from Rosina; he swore to devote himself thenceforth to the holy memory of this sister of the angels. After having mourned for an hour, he was seized, as by a sudden inspiration, with a desire to retouch his figure of the *Virgin*.—“No, no!” exclaimed he, vehemently, “in effacing what I owe to the countess, shall I not also destroy this divine trace of my poor Rosina?”—He removed the canvass from the easel, bore it with a trembling

hand to the other end of the studio, and hung it over the sofa on which Rosina had seated herself for the last time in his sight. He did not confide his grief but to three or four friends, such as the Count de Caylus, Pont-de-Veyle, and Duclos. Whenever the unfinished *Virgin* was noticed in his room, he contented himself with saying, "Do not speak to me of that, for you will remind me that my time for genius has passed."

In those fine times, no one, unless it was a Rosina, died of grief. They consoled themselves for everything; Boucher consoled himself. He threw himself with still greater recklessness into all the follies of a worldly life. He had turned his back on a woman such as God created; he did the same to the landscape that expanded beneath the sun. Boucher dispensed with Nature. One day, when in a rational mood (it was but a deceptive glimmer), he left Paris for the first time since his childhood. Where did he go? he has not said; but, according to a letter written to Lancret, he found Nature very disagreeable—too green, badly managed as to light! Is it not amusing to see an artist of Boucher's calibre finding fault with the work of the great artist of light and color? Raphael and Michael Angelo were well avenged in advance, for, as you will see directly, Boucher was not at the end of his criticisms. What is still more amusing, Lancret answered Boucher thus: "I agree with you. Nature is wanting in harmony and attractiveness."—I can fancy to myself Boucher in the midst of a fine, but somewhat wild country, trying to understand, but understanding nothing of the great spectacle worthy of

God himself; hearing nothing of all those hymns of love which Nature raises to Heaven, in the voice of rivers, of forests, of birds, and of humanity; seeing naught of that divine harmony, in which are blended the hand of God, and the hand of man, the hand which creates and the hand which labors. In the midst of all these marvels, Boucher kept on his way, like an exile who treads a foreign land. He sought his gods.—“Where is Pan? Where is Narcissus? Where is Diana, the huntress?”—He called; none answered, not even Echo. He sought for those mortals who were familiar to him; but where were those pretty and gallant *fêtes champêtres* to be found? He could not even find a shepherdess in the meadow. He was doubtless overcome with joy on re-entering his studio, to return to his pretty rosy landscapes, over which were spread the enchantments of fairyland. He was surnamed the painter of fairies with good cause, for he lived, loved, and painted, only in the world of fairies.

After these two decisive checks, Boucher abandoned himself more than ever to the frolicsome coquetry and mannered grace habitual to him. His studio again became a boudoir, much haunted by actresses. He was not twenty-six, but was everywhere in demand, at first on account of his talents, afterward for his pleasant manners. The academicians alone rejected him, because he had the haughty bearing of a gentleman, and because he laughed somewhat at their gravity; perhaps, also, because he ridiculed art a little. But who were, then, the academicians? Had they the right, except it was Jean Baptiste Vanloo and Boulogne, to reject Boucher?

In the eyes of all reasonable judges, he gained the Roman prize. However, the Academy did not so decide. Nevertheless, he set out for Rome; the third and last attempt to find art and nature; but he put the Academy in the right, for he wasted his time in the City of the Arts. He pronounced Raphael insipid and Michael Angelo an artist of deformity! Forgive him for his profanity or his blindness! Criticism on God might pass; but on Raphael! on Michael Angelo!

Boucher had left for Rome with Carle Vanloo; he returned alone, without money or studies, denying the merit of all the masterpieces. What could one then augur of such a painter? He was not, however, despaired of.—“His talent has ruined him, his talent will save him,” said the Count de Caylus, a just and profound remark, which well describes Boucher’s talent. In proof of this, he was scarcely back again when he became all the fashion; he had only to paint, to give applause. All the great mansions, all the splendid country-seats were thrown open to his graceful talents. He worked day and night, amusing himself at the expense of everybody, including himself, producing, as by magic, Venuses in angelic choirs and angels equipped with arrows. He had no time to be very particular. He went on and on as rapid as the wind, finishing on the same day a *Visitation* for St. Germain des Prés, a *Venus at Cythera* for Versailles, a design for an opera-scene, a portrait of a duchess, and a painting of scandalous design, by turns inspired by heaven and hell, no longer believing in glory, giving himself up, body and soul, to making a fortune. During the

remainder of his life, he made every year not less than fifty thousand livres, equivalent to a hundred thousand at the present day. He lived in grand style; he lived beyond his income; he affected the philosophy of the time; he ridiculed all that was noble and grand; he doubted God, and all that comes to us from him, the virtue of the heart, the aspirations of the soul. He gave regal fêtes, one among others which cost him a year's work, a celebrated festival, called the festival of the gods. His design was to represent Olympus, and all the pagan divinities. He himself was Jupiter; his mistress, disguised as Hebe, that is to say, in very scanty garments, passed the night in serving ambrosia to all these counterfeit gods and goddesses. The Academicians, astounded at these achievements, determined upon admitting Boucher, the noisy fame of whose school had thrown the Academy into the shade. Boucher was no more of an Academician after he had the title than before. He continued to live as a prodigal, and paint as an artist without faith.

He did not content himself with painting, but engraved and modelled also; he engraved a large number of Watteau's designs; he modelled, on a small scale, groups and dancing-girls, for the manufactory at Sèvres. His engravings and modellings are worthy of his best pictures; they possess the same grace, the same spirit, and the same smile. By thus multiplying himself, Boucher extended his reputation everywhere; you might see at the same time his plump *Cupids* on mantel-pieces, his *Nymphs* on watches, his engravings in books, his pictures on all the walls. As Boucher did not sell his works at high

prices, he owed his large income to his prodigious facility. Madame Geoffrin bought two of his prettiest pictures, for the sum of two thousand crowns, and they were not his worst-paid pictures. The empress of Russia bought them from Madame Geoffrin, for thirty thousand livres. Madame Geoffrin went as fast as she could after Boucher, and said to him: "I have often told you that pictures bear high interest in my hands; here are twenty-four thousand livres which accrue to you for your *Aurora* and *Thetis*."—It was not the first time that good Madame Geoffrin had engaged in this kind of trade. She had begun it with Carle Vanloo.

Soon after his return from Rome, he fell in love with a young girl of a citizen family, one of the most beautiful women in France—perhaps the most beautiful. Her portrait is at Versailles; Raoux has represented her as a *Vestal*. You may see her, feeding the sacred flame—the sacred flame of whom? Not of Boucher or of herself; for, if there is flame anywhere in the picture, it is in the Vestal's glances. Boucher was so desperately in love with her, that despairing of obtaining what he wanted in any other manner, he resigned himself to submit to marriage, although, as he facetiously remarked, "marriage was not habitual with him." Having become his wife, she often sat for his *Virgins* and *Venuses*; you may recognise her here and there in Boucher's works. What, however, was more worthy of him and of herself, was that she presented him with two charming daughters, who appear to have modelled themselves after the most blooming and beautiful of the painter's forms. She

died at twenty-four, "too beautiful," said the inconsolable Boucher, "to live long in the atmosphere of Paris."

Less than seventeen years after his marriage, Boucher married his daughters to two painters, who were not of his school, Deshays, who almost possessed genius, and Baudouin, who would have been the La Fontaine of painting if he had relied entirely on simplicity. Madame Boucher and her two daughters passed their lives amid the splendors of the world and amid tears. Charming and beautiful as they were, they often found themselves neglected for opera-girls, or other chance-comers. Boucher, Deshays, and Boudouin, had tasted the bitter grapes of evil passion. They were but momentarily sensible of the grace and virtue of a wife; the chaste fragrance of the household fireside could not charm their hearts; a more exciting intoxication was needful to these abandoned souls, a cup less pure for their polluted lips. The ambrosial locks of the spouse were not sufficient to enchain their love. They sought for lascivious embraces, deadly caresses, all the galling chains of voluptuousness. They all three died about the same time, within the space of a year—the youngest first, Boucher the last, after having been a witness to the despair of his companions. Deshays was, perhaps, the only great painter after Lesueur. He had, in 1750, a feeling for beauty and grandeur. Accordingly, Boucher, who was a man of good sense sometimes, seeing such a pupil in his studio, took good care not to give him instruction. He contented himself with giving him his daughter, saying humorously "Study with her." As for Baudouin, he was

Greuze and Boucher in miniature; or, according to Diderot, "a jumble of Fontenelle and Theocritus."

Boucher, therefore, pursued his career in the same fatal direction, in which he had lost himself while following his master's path. In spite of the money he made, and the vain-glory which each day brought him, he was never happy, he never enjoyed the consciousness of possessing heart or talent. He was but too conscious of his faults as a man and as a painter. He knew that he was wasting away in vain sparks the little sacred fire which Heaven had lit in his soul during the fine days of his youth. He foresaw that his works would perish with him. To distract his mind from such melancholy thoughts, he exhausted all kinds of dissipation. Toward the end of his life, he made some approach toward Nature. He built, by way of an *amende honorable*, a kind of temple to her: that is to say, a Cabinet of Natural History, in which Buffon more than once studied. At his death this cabinet was sold for a hundred thousand livres. It was all that Boucher left of a great fortune. "It was," he said, "to pay for his funeral."

He went incessantly into society. Madame Geoffrin, who had succeeded to Madame de Tencin's circle, gave two dinners a week, on Monday to artists, and Wednesday to men of letters. Marmontel, who dined rarely then, except when he dined out, was at Madame Geoffrin's table on both Mondays and Wednesdays. In his memoirs he passes the guests in review. He says, in reference to the artists: "I was at no loss to perceive that, with natural ability, they were almost all deficient in study and culture.

Good Carle Vanloo possessed, in a high degree, all the talent that a painter can have without genius; but he was without inspiration, and to make up for it, he had devoted himself but little to those studies which raise the soul and fill the imagination with great objects and great thoughts. Vernet, admirable in the art of painting water, the air, the light, and the action of these elements, had all the models of compositions of this class very vividly present to his imagination; but beyond this, although he has some spirit, he was a commonplace artist. Latour possessed enthusiasm; but, his head already confused with the political and moral questions on which he fancied that he could argue ably, he thought himself humiliated if any one spoke to him about painting. If he took my portrait, it was only on account of the complaisance with which I listened to him as he regulated the destinies of Europe. Boucher had some fire of imagination, but little truth, still less dignity. He had not seen the graces in respectable company. He painted Venus and the Virgin after the nymphs of the green-room, and his language, as well as his pictures, reminded one of the manners of his models and of the tone of his studio."

Madame de Pompadour and Madame Dubarry both admired Boucher's talents. What was more natural? Did he not seem made expressly to paint these queens by chance? Were they not two of those muses whence he derived inspiration? Had they not the coquettish grace, the wayward glance, and the smiling lips, which make up the charm of Boucher's women?

He became first painter to the king on the death

of Carle Vanloo. His elevation to the dignity surprised no one. Nothing caused astonishment then, when Madame Dubarry was seated on the throne of Blanche of Castile. Besides, as the king, such the painter. Louis XIV. and Lebrun, Louis XV. and Boucher, had they not the same kind of dignity?

Of all this generation, crowned with faded roses, Boucher was the first to die, in the spring of 1770, with his pencil in hand, although he had been ill for a long time. He was alone in his studio. One of his pupils wished to enter. "Don't come in," said Boucher, who, perhaps, felt that he was dying. The pupil closed the door and withdrew. An hour after, Francis Boucher, the painter, was found expiring before a picture of Venus at her toilet.

He led the way. All the painters, the abbés, the poets of gallantry, soon followed him to the dark mansion of the dead, the king of France at their head, supported by his reader in ordinary, Moncrif, who had never read anything to him, and by his famous librarian, Gentil-Bernard, who had never turned over anything but the petticoats of the opera. It pleases my fancy to depict to myself this half-funereal, half-burlesque spectacle of all those men of wit, who departed so gayly, but persisted in uttering a witty speech before dying, in order to die as they had lived. In a few years, all the wit, the joy, the fascination, and the folly of the eighteenth century, were seen to descend into the tomb. Without speaking of Madame de Pompadour, Boucher, Louis XV., and of some celebrated actresses, such as Madame Favart and Mademoiselle Gaussin, do we not behold in the mournful procession Crébillon and

his libertine stories, Marivaux and his delicate comedies, the Abbé Prévost and his dear *Manon*, Panart and his vaudevilles, Piron and his jokes, Dorat and his madrigals, the Abbé de Voisenon and the children of Favart, the most certainly his of all his works? Who more? Rameau, Helvetius, Duclos, Voltaire, Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Are these enough? Who then will remain to finish the century? The queen, Marie-Antoinette, will remain, who also lived this mad life, who smiled like the women of Boucher, who is destined to be punished for all these fine people, who is destined to die on the guillotine, another Calvary, between a woman of the town, Madame Dubarry, and a king of the populace, Hébert, to die with the dignity of Christ, crowned with her whitened locks, bleached by a night of heroic penitence.

The history of Boucher has its logic, the life of the painter accords with his work; there is no more truth in the passion of the one than in the picture of the other; both, however, must be taken as the expression of an epoch. It is thus that Boucher has survived. The fact of his being true to his time, proves him true in one respect, in spite of all his falsehoods. His style of painting has not a positive value in the annals of art; it is scarcely an episode of partial interest, it is a degeneracy of art. This frivolous era is lost between two serious epochs. The eighteenth century was the prodigal offspring of a worthy and serious age. Boucher is to Lesueur what Fontenelle is to Corneille. Affectation distorted original character, wit destroyed naturalness, and beauty the eternal law of art, becomes only a graceful caprice.

Does Boucher demand of us any profound criticism? When we say that he was the painter of coquettish graces, have we not said all? On examining his character and his works more closely, we can not venture thus to despatch him with a single word. His mind felt more than one deep inspiration, more than once was his heart deeply moved by the remembrance of Rosina. Nature has eternal rights which command our obedience: there is no use in trying to escape, she always reasserts her sway. Let us, therefore, not judge Boucher hastily, but turn over his work with a patient hand. Is there, then, nothing grand and nothing beautiful beneath those false seductions? Have the light of the sun and the light of art never illuminated those landscapes and those faces? Did Boucher never reach the truth?

The grand gallery of the Louvre has not a single one of his pictures. It appears to me, however, that he deserves a little space in a good light, between his friends Watteau and Greuze. Who would complain of seeing what kind of pictures were painted a century ago by him who became painter in chief to the king, director of the Academy, and of the Gobelins? For those who study there would be the material for curious comparisons; for those who seek only for amusement there would be so many pretty pictures the more. We have a singular mode of being national in France. We are so hospitable to foreigners that there is no room left for the natives. For the last few years, it is true, an asylum has been deigned Boucher in a badly-lighted gallery, that on the side of the river, which greatly resembles a cemetery of art, to judge by the silence and soli-

tude which reign there. Two paintings of the painter of Louis XV. are to be found there; the first chapters of his *Pastoral Amours*. Nothing is more agreeable to the eye. We advance, lost in astonishment: the eye loses itself in the voluptuous vagueness of the landscape. We smile on those queens disguised as shepherdesses; we detach ourselves from the present: we follow those doves in their amorous flight; we lose ourselves, completely overcome, in those scented groves. Where are we? On the banks of the Lignon, or in the paths of Cytherea? On the freshly-grown grass of what blooming flowery Eden are we treading? The dream lasts but a moment. Such a terrestrial paradise never existed anywhere; such shepherds never lived. They are pale ghosts of Watteau whom Boucher has reanimated with roses. We soon withdraw without retaining the interest which had seized us at first sight; but smiling at that air of magic which Boucher had the art of casting over all his faults.

I have some other paintings of his before me. *The Sleep of the Bacchantes, the Intoxication of the Loves, Jupiter carrying off Europa, the See-Saw, Mercury Teaching Cupid to Read, and the Basket of Flowers*. This last picture is the most beautiful: the shepherdess, Astrea, her feet are bare, and her locks are floating in the wind, is lying asleep, within two steps of a fountain, against a tufted hedge without thorns, or, at least, the thorns are concealed. Some pretty white sheep are browsing or bounding over the meadow, which has more flowers than grass: a dog, all bedecked with ribands is watching over the flock and the imprudent shep-

herdless at the same time ; the sky is divinely serene. There are, however, some clouds here and there, the clouds of love. The silence is almost like that of night ; scarcely do we hear the murmur of the breeze, but do we not hear the beating heart of Astrea ? She sleeps, but she dreams. We see by the agitation of her pretty feet that it is a dream of love. Patience ! the picture becomes animated. The shepherd Amyntas comes from the neighboring arbor, a true Cytherean arbor ; he carries in his hand a beautiful basket of flowers, flowers of all seasons ; the painter has culled them without looking at his almanac. There is even in the bouquet a flower of a new species, half-concealed by the others. This flower, which spoils the bouquet somewhat, but by no means the entire affair, is a *billet-doux*. The shepherd advances mysteriously, he smiles at the watchful dog, he hangs his basket of flowers on the tufted hedge, by the arm of the sleeper, who is no longer asleep, but pretends to be. Let her who has never pretended to be asleep cast the first stone at her ! Astrea, therefore, listens with closed eyes : she hears the wind rustling through the sedge, the refreshing murmur of the fountain. What then ? You may guess ! She hears the cooings of the doves, and the sighs of the shepherd Amyntas ; she inhales the sweet perfume of the verdure, but above all the intoxicating perfume of the basket of flowers. O poor innocent, beware of Love, he has just seized an arrow ! The shepherd Amyntas advances a step, his lips have made two ; here the dog barks in spite of the caresses of the traitor, but the dog cautions the sleeper too late, the kiss is taken

Almost all Boucher's power is to be found in this single picture. We find in it his amorous conception, his fictitious grace, his mournful and smiling landscape.

The two volumes of Boucher at the Print-Room of the Royal Library, do not contain a quarter of his works. We must seek elsewhere, also, for the best engravings, copied after him, and sometimes engraved by himself. Thus he has engraved, with a master-hand, the only portrait of Watteau which we possess. On looking at these two men, Watteau and Boucher, we do not discover the least trace of the character of their talents. They are without grace, and almost without the expression of the least genius. Watteau is hard and heavy; Boucher looks somewhat like an old Roman. Lavater would be much embarrassed beholding them and their works. As for Boucher, the physiognomist would maintain the truth of his system, by appealing to the dress, for Boucher was dressed like Dorat, with the same elegance and precision.

If caprice or curiosity induce you to consult Boucher's works in the Print-Room, you will find at the outset a *Rachel*, which recalls somewhat his dear Rosina; on the next page, a theatrical-looking *Christ*, absurdly treated; followed by a *Descent from the Cross*, which is more like a Descent from the *Courtillie*; some *Saints*, who will never go to Paradise; *Seasons* and *Elements*, represented by puffy Cupids, with verses in similar taste; some *Muses*, who will not inspire you in the least; a *Rape of Europa*, which recalls Madame Boucher; *Venus* at all ages; some curious imitations of David Teniers;

a *Portrait of Boucher*, at the time he turned Flemish painter: he is in full rustic costume, wrapped in a fur robe, and wearing a cotton nightcap. After having failed in the true, he returned to the graceful. After these imitations of David Teniers, you will find the *Pastoral Amours*, which are Boucher's masterpieces. You will find in them imagination, voluptuousness, grace, magical effect, and even merit in the landscape. Salute after these *Babet, the Flower-Girl*; an *Erato*, she who inspired Boucher, and not the Muse of the Greeks; some *Girls*, harvesting, gardening, begging, and reaping; some *Profiles*, almost worthy of Callot; salute those *Chinese Figures*, who appear to have detached themselves from your screen, your fan, or your China porcelain. Let us return to France: unfortunately, Boucher always remained somewhat of a Chinese. But patience: here we have true comedy, the comedy of Molière; all the scenes are there painted in a piquant and almost natural manner. The last *Valères* are not dead; neither are the last *Celimenes*. Comedians in ordinary to the king would find much to study there, if they have not already done so. For my part, I should be very readily contented with the style in which Boucher enacts Molière's comedies.

The second volume opens with the *Graces*, the Graces at the bath, the Graces everywhere. *Cupid* reappears; always Cupid, this time enchained by the Graces, with this couplet of the Cardinal de Bernis:—

How many fickle ones are bound
With the girdle of the Graces!

The girdle of the Graces is a garland of flowers

After this comes (she could not be better placed) Madame de Pompadour; but the painter painted her when she was too old to make a Grace of. The scene changes. We find German engravings after Boucher. Boucher engraved by serious Germans; what a grotesque translation! Here the painter shows us his handwriting; it is like the clear and graceful handwriting of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. We pass to religious subjects; but do not be afraid; Boucher will be able to laugh again. These are the designs for the *Paris Breviary*, made doubtless after the designs of Petites-Maisons; it is a tolerably-pretty satire; for example, he makes Faith hover over the Invalides, and Hope over the Louvre and Tuileries. The archbishop and the king did not understand it. There yet remains a pleasant *Country-Pair*; some pretty designs for romances; the *Cries of Paris*, freely treated; a poetical composition of a fortune-telling scene in the open air; an Olympus, with the gods boldly exhibited in full muster.

All these works do not constitute a great painter, but do they not offer a reasonable protest against the disdainful airs which some persons affect toward Boucher? To judge an artist of the second rank properly, we must behold him in his own time, in the presence of his works and his contemporaries, after having first viewed him at a distance. We must hear what he has to say, so to speak, and not condemn him by default. If Boucher could speak to us, he would say: "I saw what was passing around me; I saw that religion, royalty, genius, and all that was great, was changing, failing, dying out. Could I become a man of genius among such dwarfs? and,

besides, had I the stuff to be one? I did as every body else did. They laughed, they made love, they became intoxicated after supper. I laughed, I made love, I became intoxicated. You can see by my pictures that it was so. The priests were playing at religion, the kings at royalty, the poets at poetry; do not think it strange that I played at painting. I have done wrong to no one, at least, intentionally. I have made two millions by my pencil; it was so much drawn from the rich; I have made such good use of it, that I have scarce enough left to bury me with. If you wish to know to whom I owe my poor talents, I must answer you that I know nothing about it. I have admired alternately Watteau, Rubens, and Coustou."

Watteau, Rubens, and Coustou: these were Boucher's three masters; but he never had the sparkling animation of the painter of the *Fêtes galantes*, nor the splendid touch of the great Flemish colorist, nor the noble dignity of the French sculptor (it must be confessed that the marble dignifies). By the side of these three masters, Boucher may here and there hold his ground. More than one admirer of the past will smile at his coquettish grace, at his foolishly-lively imagination, at the blue haze of his landscapes, at the voluptuous mysteries of his arbors, at his faces so blooming that they appear fed on roses, according to the expression of an ancient writer. Diderot, who founded an encyclopedia, who invented the drama of common life, who opened a school of morals, did not desire to know anything about the painter of Madame de Pompadour and Madame Dubarry, especially as he let himself be guided somewhat in his ideas on

painting by Grenze, the born enemy of Boucher. See, however, how Diderot criticises this painter, in his free way of speaking: "I venture to say that Boucher never once saw Nature, that Nature at least, which is formed to interest my soul, yours, that of a well-born child, that of a woman who feels; among an infinity of proofs which I might give, a single one will suffice, it is that in the multitude of figures of men and women which he has painted, I defy any one to find any suitable for a bas-relief, still less for a statue. There are too many airs, graces, and affectations, for a severe taste. There is no use of his displaying them to me naked, I always see the rouge, patches, trinkets, and all the trumpery of the toilet. Do you think that he had any idea of the charming and noble figure of Petrarch,

E'l riso, e'l canto, e'l parlar dolce, umano !

As for those fine and delicate analogies which summon objects upon the canvass, and unite them together by imperceptible threads, by heaven! I do not believe that he knew what they were. All his compositions seem to the eye to be keeping up an insupportable hubbub. They are the most mortal enemies to repose which I know of. When he paints children he groups them well, but they are always fooling away in the clouds; for of all this innumerable family you will not find one employed in the actual occupations of life, in studying his lesson, reading, writing, or twisting hemp. They are romantic and ideal beings, little bastards of Bacchus or Silenus. These children could be readily produced in sculpture on the surface of an antique vase. They are

fat, plump, and chubby. If the artist could sculpture in marble, his style would be in character. He is not, however, a fool; he is a false painter of merit as there are false wits. He has not the thoughts of art, he has but its *conceits*." After this preamble, however, Diderot condescends to declare, in reference to four pastoral scenes, that "Boucher had his rational moments," that he had produced a charming poem. A little further on he retracts a little of his severity. "I have spoken too harshly of Boucher. I retract. I have seen children by him which are really and truly children. Boucher is graceful, and by no means severe; but it is difficult to unite grace and severity."

Boucher, who had a hundred pupils, has left no school. Fragonard alone, among his pupils, often recalls the style of his master; and Fragonard threw away more recklessly than Boucher a more gifted mind. Greuze, at the same time that he looked down upon Boucher, with his friend Diderot, recalls also the freshness and smile of this painter. Can we not find some trace of him in the *Broken Pitcher*?

David was also a pupil of Boucher, doubtless, because he was his cousin; but in this case the lessons of the master can not be traced in the pupil. While he admired Boucher, he feared to follow his example. It is the mournful consequence of excess in art that the reaction which follows takes the opposite extreme. To reflecting minds, the departing Boucher explains the coming David. The latter makes sublimity rigid after the other has relaxed grace. Boucher was nothing more than a fancy painter, because

he tried to trick out Nature in prettiness; David only a conventional painter, because he sought the real in the types of an ideal statuary. Thus did both, one in almost forgotten valleys, the other on proud hill-tops, fail in their aims, and contend without victory. Nature was before them, ever opening infinite horizons to them beyond the mountains, but they passed-by without regarding her.

And yet Boucher will live in the history of French painting. He did not raise his head to receive the golden crown, which genius has placed upon the head of Poussin and Lesueur. He could not grasp with his profane hand the chain of divine sentiment which reaches from Poussin to Géricault, after having touched Lesueur, and some others of less dignity; but like a second Anacreon, Boucher crowned himself with vine-leaves in the company of his mistresses; and with careless hand stripped off the leaves of the garland of flowers which is the Graces' girdle, of that garland, which a century ago, was the girdle of France.

LANTARA.

THE tavern was almost always the studio, the castle in the air, the horizon of Lantara, in which respect he resembled two Flemish painters, Brouwer and Craesbeke. It is not my aim to write a course of morals on painting. Like the poets, like all disciples of art, the painters have the privilege of descending into the dark depths of vice, and thence taking their flight to the splendors of art. Striking contrasts have been witnessed ; the lower the soul descends, the greater force does it seem to gather for its upward course to the regions of divinity. St. Augustine has expressed it, " While the Angel of Darkness spreads over us the shade and luxurions boughs of terrestrial pleasure, the guardian Angel, far from abandoning us, sheds upon our arid hearts the chaste dew of the celestial fields, it hovers above and around us, as if to cover us with its white wings." However, by dint of passing through the forest of pleasure, man ends by leaving there his pure robes. They are by little and little torn to shreds ; as soon as the soul has undergone the first shock, the mischief is done, the mischief is for a long time irreparable ; the horizon becomes

troubled, the imagination loses its morning freshness, thought only casts a pale ray here and there, producing neither heat nor light.

Nothing is known of the origin of Simon-Mathurin Lantara. It is said that he was born at Fontainebleau, or near Montargis. His father was a poor sign-painter from Piedmont, his mother a dealer in small toilet articles. Their marriage appears to have been consummated without the aid of the priest. The painter and the shopwoman were none the happier on that account. However, according to the phrase consecrated by usage, Heaven blessed their union, since they had a great number of children. Mathurin early became familiar with the sad spectacle of a father who got drunk and beat his wife, when the wine was bad. Mathurin promised himself, if he should one day be able to drink his wine, that he would have good wine. He kept his word, as you will see. In his father's house, he early became acquainted with the sorrows of wretchedness. He saw his mother weep, he wept with her; she ended by consoling herself, he does not dare to say how: he consoled himself too; perhaps he ought to have wept all the more: but he did not come into the world to be always crying. To console himself he went out. He was little more than twelve years old when the grand spectacle of Nature had already an interest for him. Escaping from school and boyish amusements, he carelessly lost himself in the forest. Overpowered with wonder at the old moss-covered trees, the savage rocks, the smiling vistas, the steep hillsides, whence the sand pours down like a sparkling fountain. He followed with a ravished glance the

thousand changing tints which the sunlight scattered here and there. The sun seen through the trees was to him a magic picture. By dint of being present at all the metamorphoses of Nature, he became cognizant of her mysteries. He early learned the harmony of earth and sky, the gentle tremblings of the plants before the gathering storm, the fresh blooming of the trees, bushes, and flowers, after the rain and the storm had passed over Nature, the cheerfulness of the morning after the sun has dispersed the fog hovering over the hill-tops, when the breeze scatters the dew and the perfume of the flowers, the religious melancholy of the twilight, when the sun has but a ray left, a ray for the spire which looks so blue beyond the green trees, for the laborer who has reached the last furrow, for the gleaner who is smiling beneath her burden. Mathurin Lantara became passionately attached to such sights. The day was soon not long enough for his poetical wanderings. He sometimes passed the nights in the fields, under the clear moonlight; he sat down on the edge of a pond or lake, and there, listening to the prophetic bird of night, his head resting on his hand, he contemplated the moon as it was reflected through the foliage in the watery mirror. He was seized with so ardent a love for Nature, that he talked aloud to the plants and trees.

Lantara communed with the plants; never with men. If he met a shepherd or a hunter, he got out of the way as quickly as he could, as if he had feared being caught in some piece of mischief. An old canon of Fontainebleau, however, who was also fond of walking, succeeded, by degrees, in taming this

young savage. He followed him; was one day a witness to his tender apostrophes to the daisies and violets, the sun and the clouds. He spoke to him with so much mildness and sympathy, that Lantara listened to him with interest, without thinking of taking flight. The next day a similar meeting took place. The canon had the fables of La Fontaine in his hand.—"Do you know how to read, my child?"—"Yes," said Lantara, "but I get very tired of it."—"I will give you this book, which will not tire you."—They walked along together; the canon sat down to rest at the foot of an immense sand-bank. Lantara, without troubling himself about his old friend, cut a stick, and began to trace figures at his feet. The canon, who has related this incident, does not tell us what was the subject of the sketch; he contents himself with relating that Lantara, more sollicitous about the color than the outline, availed himself of the varieties of white, grey, red, yellow, and blue sand. He had tints of all sorts for the composition of this new style of mosaic.

The autumn, with its yellow leaves; the winter, with its hoar frost, had also their charms for Lantara. He followed Nature, step by step, in all her works: works of life and works of death. In the autumn he went to the desolate ravine, to see the leaves roll in the torrent; in winter he saddened his mind before the solemn representation of death.

We lose trace of Lantara between his fifteenth and his twenty-fifth year. It is said that, on his arrival at Paris, he stumbled into the studio of a dauber, who, struck with the talent of the youth, undertook to lodge and board Lantara for his work, reserving to him-

self the right of signing the best landscapes at his own pleasure. This is, word for word, the same story as that of Brouwer, another painter of the tavern. It has also been said that Lantara studied in a wretched studio at Versailles, with a peddling painter, who made him paint the backgrounds of his pictures, at the rate of forty sous a day. These are not very reliable stories. I prefer to believe that Lantara had no other teacher than his father, the sign-painter; his own instincts taught him the rest.

We find him again at Paris, still solitary, still poor; he painted moonlights and sketched forests, but was not aware of his genius. How can we believe the fact, that everybody lauded in his presence the rose-colored landscapes of Boucher? He would not submit to become a follower of this bad master, who saw Nature only in the heathen mythology. Lantara had been to a better school; he had seen Nature only as she was, in all her magic power, without periphrasis, and without hyperbole. He knew nothing in the world about drawing, but how did it happen that, with three strokes of his pencil, he could detach a tree from the flank of a mountain, and make a waterfall dash over the rugged rocks. It was because he was his own master; he was an inspired painter, like Giotto, like so many others, predestined to be artists.

Do you wish to know what use he made of his talents?

In a dingy and dilapidated house, in the neighborhood of the Louvre, above a fruiterer, above a forgotten dancing-girl, above a sacristan, had Lantara built his nest. This dwelling of the painter's is so

bare and desolate that a sheriff's officer would not think it worth an attachment. A truckle-bed, a table, an easel, form pretty much its entire furniture. How could poor Lantara have abandoned the pleasant landscape of Fontainebleau for such a retreat? We might understand it if the window looked out upon any prospect, but none is to be seen. Naught is visible but chimneys and garret-windows, a little sunlight through the smoke. Lantara, however, never sees this sad picture. His memory is great. He had only to descend into himself to recover, in all their morning freshness, in all their springtime grace, the landscapes in which his first fifteen years had been embosomed. See, he has inscribed here and there on the blue paper of his chamber whole pages of his recollections. He needed for this only a little charcoal and a little chalk. Besides, he scarcely ever works in this room, unless inspiration gets the better of idleness, which seldom happens, since inspiration never moves him, except at the sight of a glass of old wine. As soon as he is on his feet, he descends to the next wine-shop or the next café. At both there is a large book which is presented to him as soon as he arrives. While breakfast is preparing, he opens the large book, and makes a drawing in it in less than a quarter of an hour. He calls this Rabelais' quarter of an hour. The drawings do not remain long in the large book, for connoisseurs pay for them in advance. When Lantara has breakfasted, he takes a walk like a good citizen of Paris, with nothing to do. He was a great simple child, like La Fontaine, amusing himself with everything, forgetting time and place, with the proverbial carelessness of an artist. He returns

to dine, sometimes at the café, sometimes at the wine-shop, according to the caprice of the moment; it is the same story as in the morning: the great book lies on his table. To stimulate the talents of the designer, the innkeeper spreads before him the oldest bottles in his cellar. After dinner, Lantara takes another walk, like a careless idler who has all his time to spare. In the evening, being no longer able to promenade, he drinks to pass the time. He is really the most good-natured drunkard in the universe: he drinks generous wines; each glass engenders some piquant novelty, some original sally. Toward midnight, he re-enters his sorry abode, and sleeps marvellously well in his wretched bed. It is hard to understand how, with his undoubted talent, he remained in this wretched atmosphere, with no other companion but poverty.

Incapable of managing himself, he needed a second Madame de La Sablière. An idle dreaminess had taken possession of him; his mind was lost amid a thousand deceitful temptations. If we may so speak, he was a denizen of earth only at meal-times. He loved only the sun and the forests. Man appeared to him to be only a superfluity of creation: he, therefore, had none of the vanities of this lower world. He concealed his name and his existence; he would scarcely ever sign his drawings or his pictures. He might have become rich, but of what use was money to him? The Count de Caylus paid him a hundred crowns for a picture; it was a moonlight view. Lantara was in an uncomfortable state, not knowing what to do with so much money. He fancied that all the rogues in Paris were at his heels; every passer-by

had a sinister look. He did not dare to walk about, he did not dare to stop; he was no longer dreaming; it was all up with Lantara! He entered the tavern; it seemed to him that the very drunkards regarded him with covetous eyes. He no longer dared to get drunk: it was all over with him! He finally returned, pale and trembling, to his room. Where was he to put the hundred crowns? under his pillow. He went to bed: he could not go to sleep; his pillow is harder than usual; the hundred crowns are constantly in his thoughts. The door is only half-closed; if a robber should pass up the staircase! and a thousand other disagreeable fancies. He takes a desperate resolution, and puts the sum in the drawer of his old table. He goes to bed again, and closes his eyes; scarce has he dropped half-asleep, when he fancies that he hears those diabolical crowns dancing a shuffle; a clear and sharp noise excites him to the highest degree; he awakes with a bound like a kid; at last he goes to sleep for good, but he is not at the end of his dreams. The crowns are metamorphosed. Lantara beholds a solemn procession of well-crusted bottles pass before him. He wishes to seize something, but he grasps only a shadow. In a word, he sleeps badly, like a bad rich man. In the morning, Lantara takes his money, cursing riches as he does so. He goes to the tavern, to relate his misfortune: certain worthy persons compassionate and aid him, by good bumpers to free himself of his crowns. He joyfully resumes his course of life, his careless wretchedness, his vagabond reveries.

Poverty was his veritable muse of inspiration. As soon as he was possessed of a crown he could do

nothing. It is related that some great lord — his name is not given — summoned the painter, and expressed a wish to lodge him in his mansion. Not daring to refuse a nobleman so devoted to the arts, Lantara went and installed himself in the mansion with his slender baggage. He found himself very ill at ease, like a man expatriated. Vainly did he essay to paint or sketch, he was no longer in the atmosphere of his genius. Like Béranger, he had left his wooden shoes and his lute at the door. He escaped without saying a word, and returned to the tavern, saying, "I have at last shaken off my golden mantle."

Lantara was wonderfully himself under the roof of the poor artisan, before a wretched hearth, enlivened by half-naked children. There he said all that he thought: he spoke of his father who was poor; he delighted in narrating, in his strange way, his tavern adventures. What mattered the gilding of the palace to him who appreciated only the riches of Nature?

Lantara did not belong to his age. The noise and pomp of the reign of Louis XV. had not seduced or reached the simple poet of the forest of Fontainebleau. Besides, nothing, as Madame Belloch has said, was real to him except that which had no existence. He was born to live in the freedom from care of a country life. Forced to live in Paris, he sought to deceive himself by painting landscapes; if he drank it was still to deceive himself. With him wine had almost the effect of opium, for his intoxication was calm, drowsy, dreamy, if not poetical like that of Hoffmann, at least pleasant and cheerful. La Fontaine

tipsy would have given you a good idea of Lantara. This singular man not only lived apart from his time, but, so to speak, apart from himself. His body was only a coarse old tattered garment in which his soul clothed itself for want of a better ; but between the body and the soul, the prison and the prisoner, there was scarcely ever any harmony. How many times in the same day did the soul fly away to the woods and the mountains, to breathe the aroma of the turf, or to expand in the thicket, with the bird and the flower, while the body rested on the miserable bed, or was dragged along, sad and desolate, to the tavern or to the back-shop of the fruiterer !

The fruitwoman was called Jacqueline. She was a young woman of Picardy, whose good looks had captivated Lantara. She was fresh-looking and good-natured, two treasures for a woman. She sang from morning till night, her clear voice ascending as high as the painter's room. During the fine season he opened his window ; his mind, which was wandering far away, returned at the sound of Jacqueline's song. He closed his eyes, and fancied that the song came from his lost valleys, such was the rural freshness of the voice. Jacqueline, on her side, was alive to the glances of Lantara. When she saw him drunk, she pitied him from the bottom of her heart. It more than once happened that the painter, not being able to mount the stairs, halted at the ground-floor, thanks to the kindness more or less proper of the fruitwoman, Lantara, having no longer a family, had found in her a sister as well as a mistress. It was often owing to her that he did not die of hunger, abandoned to his sorry bed. When he

had no money to pay for his dinner, she discovered a thousand gentle reasons for his dining with her. He did not require much persuasion. In his days of poverty, he descended to Jacqueline's apartment at the dinner-hour. By his very mode of entrance she saw that she must set a plate for him, for he sighed and looked toward the hearth. She was a providence to him in everything. If he was unwell, she nursed him. In winter she shared with him her small stock of firewood, and Lantara had always the largest portion: the best fruits on the stall, the rosiest and most velvety peach, the most golden grapes, were always his. Jacqueline was better than Thérèse Levasseur, she was more fresh and artless. We should not be astonished at Lantara's affection for her. She might, perhaps, by her careful solicitude, have drawn him for ever from the door of the wineshop, but she died too soon to accomplish this good work. Lantara was stricken to the heart by her almost sudden death. He again found himself alone, and already growing old; he lost courage and returned to the wineshop with greater recklessness than ever. It was with great difficulty that he consoled himself. Six months after the misfortune, if any one spoke to him of Jacqueline, he still sighed and wept, whether tipsy or not. He was never willing to sell a fine landscape, which he had painted in the happy days when Jacqueline sang. One day, when his neighbor, the superannated actress, asked him why he thought so much of this picture, he answered her, "Then you do not hear Jacqueline singing in the landscape."

If I should speak of other amours of Lantara, I

should be forced to descend too low; I prefer to pass them over. It has been said that he had met Madame Dubarry. They were both on the same road, he a poor hap-hazard lover, she a reckless sinner of twenty. Besides, Lantara was acquainted, I do not know how, perhaps through his mother, with an aunt of Madame Dubarry, Cantini, a celebrated dealer in articles for the toilet.

With his mode of life, Lantara could not but die at the hospital. Every one predicted this as his last refuge. Far from trembling at this prospect, he spoke of it complacently, and thus, having fallen ill, had himself taken to La Charité (a celebrated hospital), as a matter of course. He did not die during his first admission. The superintendent, knowing whom he had to deal with, kept him as long as possible in a state of convalescence, persuading him that it would be dangerous to leave too soon. It will be readily perceived that the superintendent found his account in so doing. Lantara drew designs for him on tickets, in exchange for the use of the key of the cellar; "pay-tickets" he called them, as he set himself to work. He promised to return to such good quarters: he soon did so; but this time with death for a companion.

Lantara felt that he was dying. When one day the pencil and the glass fell from his hands, he felt that he was on the brink of the tomb. He was not terrified, but resigned himself with a good grace. "If the soul is immortal," Lantara must have thought, "mine can not run any risk of being in a worse place. The taverns and landscapes of the other world will be curious to examine. If the soul is not immortal,

there will still be something left of me in this life, a tuft of grass, a little flower on my grave, which will turn at its ease to the sun."

Before resuming the path to the hospital, he was desirous of once more beholding Nature, his first and last friend here below. Where was he to go? He has only strength enough to reach the tomb! but for the farewell meeting he can call to his aid the legs of his youth. He followed the course of the Seine as far as Mendon. He ascended into the woods, rummaged with delight in the yellow leaves, lost himself rapturously in the paths amid the brush-wood. He descended by the side of the chateau of Mendon toward Valaisy, and found himself as by enchantment, in a small, deserted, and silent valley, surrounded by woods, diversified by small lakes, with no trace of humanity except a thatched cottage. I will not attempt to describe to you the happiness of our landscape-painter. He walked about until evening, delighted with the quiet, scenting the fragrance of the late harvest, and of the apples fallen on the ground, gathering like a child the berries of the eg-lantine, the violet fruit of the heather, the last harebells of the fields, admiring the play of the sun on the lakes, and the autumn leaves; in fine, as happy as Jean-Jacques in the island of St. Pierre.

On his return, in the evening, Lantara knocked at the door of the hospital of La Charité.

In the closing hour, the confessor of the hospital gave him absolution; after which he delivered a discourse to him on the happiness of death, ending with these words: "You are happy, my son, you are passing into eternity, you will see God face to

face.”—“What, father!” murmured the dying man, in a faint voice, “always face to face, and never in profile?”—Such were his last words. He died at the same period with Gilbert, young like himself. Gilbert and Lantara were brothers in other respects than in poverty;* they both loved the forest and the mountain, the flowery meadow and the rustic path. Another dreamer of the same family followed soon afterward, to suffer on the couch of Gilbert, and die on that of Lantara: I mean Hegesippus Moreau. He, too, went to the school of Nature. Like Lantara, he disdained the shackles of human vanity. While his feet wandered in the pursuit of gross pleasures, his soul wandered in full liberty amid the green thickets or, the ever-varying pictures of the clouds. Lantara could say with Hegesippus to his soul, when about to quit the earth: “Fly without fear!”—

Of my faults, thou, fast-sleeping dove,
Nor witness, nor sharer hast been!

Lantara, like Greuze, has been a prey to the farce-writers. Four of them† set together to distort, unceremoniously, his original character. Do you know what they made of him? An historical painter! They represented him painting Belisarius? As if Lantara had ever known Belisarius! He never even heard of the Greeks and Romans! Under the bungling

* Engravings have been made of some of Lantara's pictures. Daret has engraved the *Disagreeable Meeting*, the *Amorous Shepherd*, the *Happy Butcher*, the *Amorous Fisherman*; Piquenot, the *Sheet of Water*, and the *Fish-cart*; Lebas, the first volume of the *Vices in the Neighborhood of Paris*. The burin has not, however, been able to reproduce that freshness of color and aerial mist which came without bidding to Lantara. † Picard, Barre, Radet, Destotaines.

hands of these farce-writers, this most interesting drunkard is nothing more than a vulgar dram-drinker, philosophizing instead of drinking. Besides this, they have increased the number of his works, by the addition of a posthumous daughter of marriageable age. You have foreseen that all this stupid and meaningless talk, these bottles of sky-blue wine, these pointless couplets, is to wind-up with a wedding, whereupon Lantara sings that he will henceforth paint *for glory and for Nature!*

Lantara left some pretty landscapes and a great number of drawings. These drawings, which are still sought after, are in black, on white paper, more frequently on blue paper, heightened with white; his moonlight views, the greater part of which are admirable, are all on blue paper. A great truthfulness in localities, a sky of marvellous clouds, agreeable foliage, lightly-touched distances, and a happy effect of light, are the distinguishing features of these designs. In his pictures we see that no one was ever more fully conversant with the strange caprices of nature. He expressed in a manner that could not admit of mistake, the character of all hours of the day. His mornings breathe a ravishing freshness, which fills you with youth; his afternoons an amorous excitement which goes to your heart; his evenings, a serene melancholy which induces revery; his rising and setting suns and his moonlights bear the stamp of original genius. He excelled in aerial perspective; the mist of his landscape closely approaches that of Claude Lorraine. He likes the poetical better than the picturesque; his Nature has neither deserts nor precipices; scarce do we find, here and there, a savage ravine, an Alpine

rock, to enhance the effect of his leafy woods, his verdant paths, his mild skies. Lantara had never travelled, unless from Montargis to Paris. He had not seen fit to go farther in search of Nature. How many Flemish painters have there been who have produced masterpieces without travelling so far, and under a dull sky.

A remarkable landscape in the Gallery of the Palais Royal, proves that this painter smiled in spite of himself, in the most savage scenes. Donkeys, goats, and cows, are passing over a marshy ground, bordered by gigantic rocks, ruined temples, and decayed trees. You fancy the effect is mournful: not at all: the rocks are not barren; the raspberry-vine trails its spreading tendrils over them, the hawthorn blooms about them; a clump of trees sway to and fro on the summit; these waters charm rather than chill you; you would be pleased to wet your feet in the steps of that thoughtful donkey and the frisking little goat. Those temples in ruins almost tempt you to inhabit them, you, who are neither hermit nor cenobite. These decayed trees are only awaiting a renovating spring: in a word, this melancholy landscape is one of the gayest. The sky appears to advantage, like all those of Lantara. We are astonished with reason, that this strange man should have acquired the art of painting, solely from intercourse with Nature. Scarce had he palette in hand, before he was master of color. His first landscapes are the freest and best. He painted from recollection, in his dismal retreat, badly lighted, without fire, without books, without friends. Without Jacqueline, never would pretty lips have smiled on his talents or his heart. Pale

misery, desolate loneliness, the noisy tavern, nothing was able to stifle in him the seed of genius which the Creator had planted. He was born a landscape-painter; he was a landscape-painter all his life, as easily as another is a stonecutter. It has been said that he owed his talent to the wine-shop. If Lantara had passed the time he lost in drinking in study, he might have been a second Claude Lorraine.

Lantara often hit, at the first attempt on the light and shade, the sunbeam passing among the trees, the waving image of the moon in the rippling water. He attained surprising effects by simple means. He produced groves which the imagination wanders in, amid the perfume of strawberries and mulberries, amid the melody of singing-birds! How clear are his waters! how moist his banks! how his horizons blend with the sky! His weak point is the human form: When it was necessary to introduce one, his light touch becomes heavy and awkward; his men breathe less than his trees; they have no expression, no motion; he does not paint, he petrifies the figure. He, therefore, never liked to place a personage on the scene. However, as in France, a landscape can only attract attention by figures, the first dancer who came along filled Lantara's landscapes with horses, cows, fishermen, and shepherds, fancying that he increased their value by so doing. It was almost a sacrilege! Creatures are not out of place on the earth. A cavalier escaping to a shelter in the wood, a shepherd who plaits rushes on the bank of the stream, a beggar drinking at a fountain, a peasant-girl crossing the ford on her donkey, a herd of dun cows, scattered over a meadow, are a great resource for relief and

perspective; but when the landscape-painter can not paint figures, we must take him as he is, whether called Claude Lorraine, Ruysdael, or even Lantara, and respect his works. A marquis had ordered a landscape from Lantara.—“A landscape in your own style, Monsieur Lantara; follow the bent of your fancy; but do not forget a church and a vista.”—Lantara did not allow the landscape to be waited for long. The marquis, astonished at the beauty of the scene, the freshness of the color, the simplicity of the treatment, the faithfulness of the church, but, seeing no figures, said to him, “Monsieur Lantara, you have forgotten the figures in your landscape.”—“Monsieur the Marquis,” the painter naïvely responded, “they are at mass.”—The marquis had the barbarity to reply, “Well, I will take your picture when they come out.”—Lantara thus unintentionally established a good maxim for landscape-painters who know not how to paint figures. How many landscape-painters would do well always to leave their figures at mass!

LOUIS XV.

LOUIS XIV. was hardly buried beneath the ruins of his majesty, when all the joyous passions lifted their heads gayly under Philip of Orleans. The regency was the bold prologue of the reign of Louis XV. A bold and free touch would be necessary to paint, with effect, those Saturnalia of the genius of France. That which existed in perfection under the regency was frankness; every one walked with his head erect, surrounded by his suite of vices; that mask of hypocrisy that had concealed all the faces of the court under Madame de Maintenon, was gayly torn to pieces, and trampled under foot; the regency leaned carelessly upon the unsteady shoulder of debauchery, crowning it with roses, and singing with it the loose songs of the tavern: they had no need of telling the world, that they were bold fellows in those days. The confessors and devotees had given way to the rakes and courtesans. Who would dare to say so? but we, children of the *sans culottes* of 1792, and of the soldiers of Napoleon, would have been worthy to have lived under the regency. We have the same heart, we would have the same ge-

nus, if we had enough of it, but we no longer wear the same mask. Look, too, at the ideas of those times ; was it not supposed for an instant, that there would be a social renovation at the death of Louis XIV. ? Did not the people act toward Louis XIV. dead, as we acted toward Charles X. living ? Louis XIV. was driven, kicked almost, into his tomb in the church of St. Denis ; France, after having paid dearly enough for her years of victory, abandoned herself to the priests, being humiliated and stifled by her neighbors ; the king being dead, a revolution broke out in the minds of the people ; the St. Simons and Fouriers of that day wished to elevate France, but it was only a dream, the enthusiasm of the moment. France remained crouching in fetters, the people in misery, and the human intellect in swaddling clothes. The Duke of Orleans then appeared, mocking at the nation, laughing at it without shame, intoxicating it with the fumes of his orgies. The most barefaced portraits, which show themselves along with his in this living picture of the regency, are those of the Cardinal Dubois, the Duke de Richelieu, MadamedePhalaris, and MadamedeParabère. In studying these portraits you may learn all the history of those days. The mother of the Duke of Orleans had fancied a very pretty story, descriptive by a presentiment, doubtless, of the life of her son. She used to relate that the fairies had been invited to be present at her confinement, that they had waved the enchanted wand over the cradle, and that each one had given her son a talent, so that he was endowed with all the talents. But by a mishap, as always happens in stories, an old fairy had been for-

gotten, who having disappeared for a long time from the world, had been quite overlooked. Vexed at the neglect, she went leaning on her little crutch, but when she had arrived all the other fairies had given each one her gift to the infant. More and more enraged, she gave him the ruinous privilege of rendering of no avail all the talents he had received from the other fairies. She did more, said Madame de Parabère, after having one day listened to this maternal story; she added a vice to each virtue: this was the reason why the duke was so amiable in all his vice.

What a charming tutor for Louis XV., this regent, full of genius and gayety, surnamed Philip the Gentle, who was born according to Voltaire, for *pleasure and the fine arts*; who gave to the poet Dufresny ten thousand *louis*, because he was a descendant, as he himself was, from Henry IV., who ruled the evening, after supper, in the company of his friends and his mistresses, when he had nothing more to do or to say. This merry regent whose whole life was a burst of laughter, who died without any anxiety about death, in the arms of the beautiful Phalaris, "his usual confessor," according to the songs of the times.

Love took Louis XV. by surprise, one April morning, as he was pressed to the somewhat lukewarm heart of Madame de Parabère; this love was almost maternal, almost filial, but was notwithstanding penetrated by a ray rather too warm. The love of budding youth is like an April sky: at one time the sky is perfectly clear, at another it is all clouds and showers. The love of woman in her decline, is like a rose that fades, the sun that sets, its perfume

is more choice, its glance more tender. The king of eighteen years was intoxicated with Madame de Parabère in her decline, who welcomed him without fear, sighing a little for her subdued heart, no longer tumultuous, but full of past memories.

This love did not keep Louis XV. from crying with fright, when he heard of the arrival of the princess, that he was to marry. This was getting on rather too fast for an adolescent. The old Cardinal de Fleury was so anxious for the credit of his king, that he bethought himself (no one but the Cardinal de Fleury could ever have thought of such a thing) of having in the bed-chamber of the young prince twelve beautiful pictures in the style of the times; such as the *Birth of Love*, the *Search*, the *Perished Flower*, all adorned with verses after the pattern of those of the Abbé Chaulieu:—

Upon the freshness I fed
 Of lips that only half-close;
 Her mouth is as brightly red,
 And as sweet as a new rose.

See what abbés and cardinals amused themselves with in those days!

I will not relate all the wanton amours of Louis XV. The pretty and gallant history of the dynasty of the petticoats, has been a thousand times unveiled. Why repeat how Madame de Mailly, the Duchess de Chateauroux, the Marchioness de Pompadour, the Countess Dubarry, caused to bloom and bloom again, every year of that amiable poet's life, who threw to them his royalty as a plaything, with so much joy and recklessness? Why retrace in this well known

picture with these charming faces, those thousand other beautiful women that were gathered so complacently for the pleasures of Louis XV., for the amusement of the king of France? The scandalous chronicles of the royal palaces, have been too wantonly made use of: I resist the temptation of describing the suppers of Choisy, the mornings at the Trianon.

In the midst of all these pleasures, the king was ennuýed. It appears that Louis XV. had little else to do than to become ennuýed. One day the Duke de Choiseul said to him, after a long political digression: "The people suffer, sire." He answered carelessly, "I am ennuýed."

Louis XV. found more noble interests in his wars of Alsace and Flanders. Glory tried to tear him away from pleasure. At Fontenoy, glory marched by his side; but Madame de Pompadour marched on the other side. Soon glory was vanquished for ever. In war as at court he was a poet, who gayly amused himself at the spectacle by the side of his mistress; he beheld what was going on as he kissed the hand of Madame de Châteauroux, or Madame de Pompadour. He was deficient in energy, but not in courage; he had even a disposition to greatness. Thus at Metz, when almost dead, he said to the Count d'Argenson: "Write in my behalf to the Marshal de Noailles, that while they carried Louis XIII. to his tomb, the Prince of Condé gained a battle."

After the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, the gazettes began their political tirades, the Encyclopedia burst forth with a great noise, the parliament and the

clergy were in a state of great excitement. There were pamphlets and epigrams without end. In the midst of all this noise, politicians began to stammer, liberty spoke for itself now and then. The king remarked : "The claps of thunder [he alluded to war] would have been better than all these scratchings of pens." It is not just to accuse him of not having liked men of letters ; he did not like those political reasoners who wished to rule France, but he favored all those who were contented with singing only. Apropos to the reasoners he exclaimed : "Ah ! how I pity those conscientious liars." In order to console Louis XV. for his ignorance, the regent often remarked to him, that not more than half-a-dozen truths had floated since the deluge, upon a sea of falsehoods.

He was completely the image of his time. He reposed upon the labor of Louis XIV., poesy reposed upon the masterpieces of the great age. Louis XV. played with royalty, the poets played with poetry ! The French Academy was, for the first time, under a cloud. As Piron remarked, they were the forty who had as much talent as four.

In those days instead of getting enraged they sang. There was no longer any satire, or rather satire not knowing what else to do, put itself under the protection of song. What a number of songs there were against the Jansenists, the Revolutionists, the Jesuits, *the ministers of folly, the dynasty of the petticoats, the well-beloved king !* Finally, as Camille Desmoulins remarked at a later day, France got tired of singing.

In the time of Louis XV., nothing was taken

seriously, not even death, in spite of the priest, prayer, and extreme unction. Take one example out of a thousand. Rameau, on his death-bed, wearied with the religious ceremonies of the curé of St. Enstace, cried out angrily: "What the devil are you sinning to me there, curé! you are out of tune."

From the first day, or rather the first night, of the regency, French genius was only displayed at the expense of the heart and common sense. Every one had that kind of genius; it was the epidemic of the Abderites, grand ladies, citizens' wives, ladies' maids, all were women of genius. See Marivaux's comedies. When women meddle with genius, the kingdom is in danger; good sentiments disappear under fine words. One was ready to bargain away her truth for a sally of wit; another her virtue for an epigram. The genius which is without heart, is a terrible guest that spoils and ruins us. God only knows the injury it did in those fine times of the regency. The tender gallantry that had flourished at the court of Diana of Poitiers, had faded within the forgotten pages of the *Cyruses and Clelius*, the sentimental books of that day. The gallantry which flourished beneath the glances of La Parabère and La Pompadour, was worthy of the amours of Crébillon called the Gay. The word love no longer meant passion, hope, memory: it had become merely a synonyme for licentious intrigue. There was not a madrigal that did not conceal beneath its praises some artful design; everything was laughed at, but especially the true emotions of the heart: people were hardly sincere to themselves. I had forgotten: the

more nice had preserved some remembrance of the old times; certain *petits-maîtres* perfumed themselves with the same perfume as their favorite beauties, as in the olden times the knights were wont to wear the colors of their fair ladies. Thus a new intrigue might be discovered by the curious, by a peculiar perfume. An amorous confidence often began with, "Are you not aware that the duke is using the Cyprus-powder; the marchioness is fond of amber; the abbé powders himself with the same as the wife of the marshal?" The *petits-maîtres* might be seen varying their perfumes every day, in order to pass for being men of success in their intrigues. They did not always have possession of the mistresses they published in this way. In love, the mere dream of it is a great deal. For such a dream what ludicrous farces were played! One would order his carriage for a mysterious rendezvous; an hour afterward he might be seen on foot, secretly coming in at the back-door; he would reach his bed-chamber by the back-stairs; he would be quietly eating his cold chicken while his equipage drawn up at the corner of a street where a famous beauty lived, was the scandal of the whole neighborhood. Another would take his solitary supper in his own small residence, and order guns to be fired off in order to announce to his neighbors his success. As for the women, it must be confessed, they also made use of these melancholy deceptions; they boasted in the most artless manner in the world of *having attached to their ear*, some charming rake who had the credit of only falling in love with beautiful women. A woman who had had three lovers boasted herself a philosopher; that was

carrying philosophy rather too far. A disciple of Newton wrote to a lord of his acquaintance, in 1745: "I return with pleasure to a country where the fashion does not oblige a man to abandon a woman, whose only fault is that of being his wife, and to live with another woman, whose only merit consists in having belonged to all the world."

This strange gallantry had stupefied all hearts; the talk was superficially brilliant, minds shone with tinsel, conversation assumed a peculiar jargon, but the heart was forgotten. I ask you whether the romances of Crébillon called the Gay, and of his pupils, were adapted for the cultivation of the heart? The devil knows, doubtless, how the women passed their time. If they went to church, it was not for the sake of God. The women rose from bed toward evening, put on their hoops—they had sometimes good reason for wearing hoops;—they daubed themselves with rouge and patches—in those days there was no space left for a blush;—and put on their loose robes with flowing trains. After having wasted three or four hours in powdering their hair and laughing at their husbands, they went out to listen to some fashionable preacher, or to behold some parade *à la mode*. On all sides was heard: "*Ah! zervalier, que c'est joli*"—(Ah! my lord, how charming!) (the letter Z was used at every chance, in lisping it the mouth made such a pretty, smiling pont.) Afterward they would go to some sad tragedy, as the execution of Damiens for instance, and they would exclaim—Madame de Préandean is our witness—while they were quartering the criminal, by dragging his limbs apart with horses: "*Ah! les pauvres*

zevaux, que ze les plains !"—(The poor horses, how I pity them !)

Upon the top of all this, they would go to sup in the choice little mansions of those days. Listen to a Larochevoucault of those times : " Nothing is more delightful at present than the little suppers in the little mansions. All that the poets have ever related about those places consecrated to Cupid and his mother, do not come near to the delight that these enchanting places offer. It is no longer in the groves of Paphos or Idalia, that pleasure is to be found. Our little mansions, these are the temples of Amathonta ! it is here that she has her altars, her priestesses and her victims."

In those days, to be a man of fashion, it was necessary to begin by making a fool of one's self. Fashions change in France, but fools are stationary. How many young exquisites of 1850 are there who will recognise themselves in the exquisite of 1750 ! "*On the first November*, I am in the country because it is not the thing to remain in town during the holydays. It is supposed that I am with the youthful *Louise*, while, to tell the truth, I am all alone in an old prison of a house, where I am wearied to death."—" *On the third November*, I return to Paris, and I spread the report that I have been delighted. The wife of the president looked at me very significantly : I joined her party at whist ; I lost in spite of the finest hand in the world : I kissed her hand, she smiled."—" *On the eleventh November*, I met, at the Palais Royal, the little counsellor. It was necessary for me to keep up my reputation with him ; I did so at the expense of the reputation of

all the beautiful women in the Palais Royal. Célise passed me, concealing her face behind her fan. 'See,' says I, 'she is hiding herself: this is on account of something she recollects. I am happy to see that women have not entirely stifled the voice of shame.'"

Whatever the *hérôides* of Dorat and Colardeau may say, some of the amorous epistles of those days were anything but elegiac. The Duke de Richelieu answered, by way of consolation, as follows, to a young viscountess that he had abandoned: "Madame, do not grieve so, you are formed to be the happiness of one of the footmen of your hotel; I advise you not to lose any time, for love passes away with time."

Love metamorphoses itself often in France. Sometimes it is a dreamer. There are two kinds of dreamers, the dreamer on the borders of the Lignon, and the dreamers upon the shore of Lake Lemán: at another time it is a *petit-mâitre* like Boufflers or Dorat; it is a shepherd playing his pipes; it is a *précieuse ridicule*, that opens, like Mademoiselle de Soudéry, her *circle* (saloon), her *alcove* (bed-chamber), her *recless* (boudoir), to people of leisure; in a word, a half a century hardly passes in France before love changes its character. Love was never so unlike itself as in 1750; it was enough to make the world regret the bureaux of intellect and the bureaux of fashion (as they were affectedly called) of Mademoiselle de Soudéry; those assaults with epigrams of an affected conceit, and with far-fetched madrigals when the result was nonsense, but everything was conducted in all decency and honor, in the sentimental style of the day.

Art, in 1750, was only a plaything like love ; it was a mere warbling and cooing of birds. Ask the composers of musical airs, how they had to spice their musical ragouts ; the painters of pastels how they had to put the roses into the cheeks ; the small poets what a number of artificial bouquets and pretty nothings in verse they had to get up. Art, sacrificing its majestic beauty, followed the train of *Madame de Parabère*, all painted, perfumed, wearing patches, gorgeous with lace and ribands. Hence all those poetical bouquets to *Chloris*, those *Graces* in *déshabille*, those licentious madrigals, those uncereemonious musical airs of the little operas, those *Cupids* whose roses even crowned their torches. One day, France had wandered so far from Nature and all virtue, that poetry and painting, as if from a chaste remembrance of earlier times, or, perhaps, in order to veil in history the scandals of their day, sang and painted the pure heaven of innocence ; the idyl flourished again ; but in spite of the pure rays and fresh dews which came from Germany, it flourished badly. The breath exhausted in pleasure, was wanting for poetry.

I am not now speaking of *Voltaire*, or of any of the philosophers ; they belong to the eighteenth century, but not to the reign of *Louis XV.* ; they never lived in the climate of the court ; they belong to the France of all time, not to the France of *Louis XV.* In the France of *Louis XV.*, when a poet, bursting from the earth with power and greatness, too proud to become the buffoon of the debaucheries of the *bondoir*, had elevated himself upon his indignant pride, as upon a mountain, far above all that sickly

generation, his only asylum was misery or exile, whether his name was Gilbert or Jean-Jacques.

The France of Louis XV. was Versailles. Versailles! was an endless carnival; the bishops disguised themselves as bold dragoons, the great ladies as prostitutes, the great lords as lackeys. But were these in truth disguises? This carnival of royalty and nobility has had its Lent, like all the carnivals in the world. On the 14th July, 1789, royalty and nobility covered themselves with ashes.

The atmosphere of Versailles stifled everything that was great and noble. In crossing the threshold of the palace, the men laid aside their dignity, the women their virtue. Louis XV., according to a maxim of the Duke of Richelieu, his moralist in gallantry, was, in the gayest way in the world, "the husband of all wives but his own." There are some lines of the king upon this subject worthy of Voltaire. They were singing about Adam at one of his suppers, when Louis XV. turned off his couplet as follows:—

TO ADAM.

One wife thou hadst with thee,
But that wife she was thine;
Here many wives I see,
But see not her that's mine."

How many queens of a day and queens of a night! France did not have enough duchesses and marchionesses to supply these profanities. It was necessary that the minister of the pleasures of the king—there was such a minister in those days—should fish for pearls in the sinks of poverty.

The palace of Versailles had an echo. Scandal

was the fashion of the reign. Scandal burst forth in the chateaux, even in the innermost recesses of the convents. How many young lords there were who had their *Parc-aux-Cerfs*! how many young nuns, who imitated the charming and romantic Louise of Orleans! In the chateau, the organ that was only accustomed to serious and doleful music, now resounded only for *Armidas* and *Orpheus*; an Italian buffo-singer mingled his voice, all terrestrial as it was, with the voices of young virgins. In the oratory, painting had, without ceremony, installed itself, with its mythological baggage and arms; the Abbé Chau-lieu handled, with all his usual carelessness the *Bible and the Imitation of Christ*.

The fatal breath issuing from Versailles passed throughout France, over all good sentiments, as the storm passes over the flowers and the harvest: heroism, greatness, virtue, religion, all corrupted, died, were blotted out. Religion expired amid the theological discussions of the church, and the bloody exhibitions of the Convulsionnaires. Virtue was only a despised garment, which women were afraid would hide their beauty. Greatness, banished from the court, from the palace and the church, greatness, which can never die in France, had concealed itself, waiting for better times in the retirement of the provinces, in the shop of the artisan, under the thatch of the laborer, whence, later, in the hour of danger, it was seen coming forth so often, to rule the tribune, and to command our armies. In a word, heroism, the old French heroism, having left the field of battle for the perfumed boudoir, weakened itself with frivolous pleasures and frivolous occupations. Colonels

embroidered tapestry.—“All our warriors are merely coxcombs,” said Monsieur de Coigny. The sword was no longer used to avenge insulted honor, but to protect the smile and the lap-dog of a marchioness. While they were avenging a dog with their swords, they were avenging each other on the field of battle with batons merely. The inheritors of Turenne and Condé went away to the wars for pastime, no longer animated with a noble love of France. Thus the enemy that beat the French found on the field of battle, instead of those brave leaders that appeared at a later day, actors, parrots, parasols, wigs, hair-powder, perfumery, and all the paraphernalia of a fine lady. This was the reason that the king of Prussia beat the French at Rosbach; this is the reason that the seven years’ war was so humiliating to France.

The court of France had been until then the grand theatre of the country; it was above all there that the great political and human drama was enacted. But under Louis XV. the drama is transformed into a show; the shows of the fairs are quite as good. The audience, until then silent, begins to hiss and make a disturbance. The scene changes; the drama is played out by the audience; the old theatre is turned into an antechamber and dressing-room; without the Cardinal de Bernis and the Duke de Richelieu, Madame de Pompadour and Madame Dubarry, it would never be heard of again.

The national character was less respected than ever. The court affected to be English, and the army to be Prussian. No one desired to be a Frenchman anywhere. The whole world changed character. States-

men became small poets; poets politicians; bankers and farmers-general became aristocrats; the great nobles became little abbés and farmers. Everything underwent decomposition: the chemistry which took its rise in the eighteenth century is the symbol of the eighteenth century. The priests *preached* merely like Christians; the magistrates laughed at the citizen-like dignity and sobriety of their predecessors. Ministers played like children with power, and power fell from hand to hand into the hands of the people.

Louis XV., in his careless ease, gave time to liberal opinion to make full headway. During peace the approaching steps of liberty could be heard. Liberty, that had so often set her foot in France to no purpose, now found all the approaches favorable. In this way Louis XV. did as much for Liberty as the whole army of the philosophers. He was dignified, but he did not like dignity. Nothing annoyed him more than the grand court fêtes, where he was obliged to enact the farce of royalty. He loved solitude and quiet. He used to say, as he returned to the Trianon: "Here I am at last, in retirement from the world."—He hardly cared to know what was passing beyond the boundaries of his park.—"Let the ministers batter each other with the weapons of the church and the parliament; let the Parisians make songs about everything, even about the marchioness; it is all the same to me. I have laid my sceptre at the door, or rather at your feet; is it not so, marchioness? let your will be done."—And Madame de Pompadour, taking up the sceptre, amused herself with worrying at her caprice the clergy or the parliament, the Prussians or the song-

writers. During the pomp of the public fêtes, Louis XV., who always suffered from ennui, was unmoved and taciturn; in private life he was the amiable poet, gay with love, animated with that smile of happiness that La Tour has so skilfully portrayed. He allowed himself tolerably often to exhibit evidences of wit. Thus, one day, the courtly artist just spoken of took it into his head, while painting the king's portrait, to discourse about affairs of state: "It must be confessed, sire, we have no navy."—Louis XV. recalled the attention of the artist to his pastel by the following answer: "Have you not Vernet, Monsieur La Tour?"—Another time, the Count de Lauraguais was speaking in his presence, as if it was an affair of the greatest importance, of his voyage to England.—"And what did you learn by it, if you please?" said the king.—"Sire, I learned to think——" "About horses," replied the king annoyed by his ostentation. Thus, French genius, not knowing what else to do, fell to making mere witticisms. The Marquis de Bièvre wrote a tragedy all in puns, upon Vercingétorix.

It is too well known that the king had a seraglio at Versailles, the *Parc-aux-Cerfs*. The chroniclers have written a thousand scandalous accounts of it, in which the truth is concealed beneath innumerable romances. It is pretty well known that the poor girls imprisoned there took their first lessons of reading in the *Fables* of La Fontaine and the poems of Chaulien. Their bedchambers were adorned with the most profane pictures, with that of the king to begin with.

Louis XV. thus passed his time: he never left this grove, embowered amid that terrestrial voluptuous-

ness of which St. Augustine speaks. Such debauchery might be pardoned Louis XV. the poet, but Louis XV., king of France! When Bouchardon made Louis XV.'s statue, he deceived himself, or he wished to deceive the beholders, in draping the king with a Roman toga, in crowning his forehead, unmarked with thought, with a crown of laurel, in arming his powerless hand with the sceptre of an empire. Louis XV. should have been crowned with roses; his hand should have held a glass, or grasped a woman's waist; his lips enlivened with a careless smile; and for drapery he should have worn his embroidered vest and his silk breeches. Certainly, if the artist had done this, the heroes of 1792 would never have destroyed the statue; they would have been satisfied with a laugh at it.

But why slander at the present day this irreligious but witty reign, this reign so reckless and graceful, this merry reign, strewed with faded and decaying roses? Has not the blood of 1793 washed all that quite out? Why arm ourselves against that delightful half-century, when the heart, with so much gayety, folly, and disdain, was abandoned to voluptuousness, the head to intoxication, and reputation to all kinds of scandal? Why contend seriously against the orgies of wornout lords, careless poets, abandoned marchionesses, and indolent abbés? Because, while these merry roués were amusing themselves so delightfully, France, bent beneath the yoke, and enslaved by debauchery, would have fallen drunk at the feet of the stranger, had not her most humble children, those that had been ground down by slavery and misery, risen in a day of indignation, to save

her from the bewildered hand of her kings, and the crushing foot of her enemies.

Before France had fallen, however, this royalty of women and courtiers would have fallen of itself at the feet of the people, if the wornout people had not at the cry of the philosophers, lifted their iron arm, to give it the last blow. Insulted by neighboring nations, trembling before that France which it had ruined, its last hour had come; Liberty knocked at the gate of the Louvre.—“Do not open it,” said this tottering royalty, slumbering in the arms of voluptuousness. But Liberty broke down the gate, Liberty overturning in its passage the whole band of courtiers, threw mercilessly the throne of France out of the window, that throne which was only the throne of licentiousness.

In succeeding to a royalty beset with storms, Louis XVI. became its martyr. He should have had heroic energy; he only had virtue. Of what use is virtue in a storm, except to die well? Louis XVI. died well: that is his whole life!

Notwithstanding the age grew old, it had commenced like a happy youth of fortune who throws his money out of the window and his heart to the first-comer. It was ashamed of the follies of its youth; it wanted retirement from pleasure. Too much of a seoffer to be religious, it welcomed philosophy as if it had been the promised land. It swept away with its foot its spangles and its tinsel. Truth was raised upon the altar. She had for her temple the theatre, the romance, the encyclopedia; she had for her high-priests Voltaire, Jean-Jacques, Diderot. Louis XV., who was near his death, survived his

reign. He was no longer king by the grace of God, since he had looked upon the fall of religion without stretching out a hand to protect it. France, that Louis XIV. had so well united, in order to strengthen his dominion, was again divided in favor of every one; all that remained to Louis XV. was the Parc-aux-Cerfs, the "pillow of his debauchery," as Chateaubriand has said. The people, more suffering and miserable than ever, began to complain in threats; but Louis XV. heard nothing but the songs of Versailles. Commerce declined under its hinderances; the taxes ruined agriculture; rising industry, checked, sought more favorable lands; priests and courtiers settled upon France like crows, in never-ceasing flocks; the forces were beaten on land and sea; titles of nobility that were a dishonor were conferred only on cowardice and intrigue; the honors of the Bastille and of exile were conferred upon genius and courage. In a word, contempt without, contempt within, misery and slavery: this is the dark background of the picture of this pretty reign, so gay and rose-colored at first view. And how did this decay of France and this agony of royalty affect Louis XV.? He was near his last hour, and he saw nothing beyond the horizon of his own death.—"After me the deluge," said Louis XV. It was a deluge of blood!

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MADemoisELLE DE CAMARGO.

MADemoisELLE DE CAMARGO almost came into the world dancing. It is related that Grétry, when he was scarcely four years of age, had an idea of musical tunes. Mademoiselle Camargo danced at a much earlier age. She was still in arms when the combined airs of a violin and a hautboy caught her ear. She jumped about full of life, and during the whole time that the music was playing, she danced, there is no other word for it, keeping time with great delight. It must be stated that she was of Spanish origin. She was born at Brussels, the 15th of April, 1710, of a noble family, that had supplied several cardinals to the sacred college, and is of considerable distinction in Spanish history, both ecclesiastical and national. Her name was Marianne. Her mother had danced, but with the ladies of the court, for her own pleasure, and not for that of others. Her father, Ferdinand de Cupis de Camargo, was a frank Spanish noble, that is to say he was poor; he lived at Brussels, upon the crumbs of the table of the Prince de Ligne, without counting the debts he made. His family, which was quite numerous, was brought up

by the grace of God; the father frequented the tavern, trusting to the truth that there is a God that rules over children!

Marianne was so pretty that the Princess de Ligne used to call her her fairy daughter. Light as a bird, she used to spring into the elms, and jump from branch to branch. No fawn in its morning gayety had more capricious and easy movements; no deer wounded by the huntsman ever sprang with more force and grace. When she was ten years old, the Princess de Ligne thought that this pretty wonder belonged of right to Paris, the city of wonders, Paris, where the opera was then displaying its thousand and thousand enchantments. It was decided that Mademoiselle de Camargo should be a dancing-girl at the opera. Her father objected strenuously: "Dancing-girl! the daughter of a gentleman, a grandee of Spain!"—"Goddess of dance, if you please," said the Princess of Ligne, in order to quiet him. He resigned himself to taking a journey to Paris in the prince's carriage. He arrived in the style of a lord at the house of Mademoiselle Prévost, whom the poets of the day celebrated under the name of Terpsichore. She consented to give lessons to Marianne de Camargo. Three months after his departure, M. de Camargo returned to Brussels, with the air of a conqueror. Mademoiselle de Prévost had predicted that his daughter would be his glory and his fortune.

After having danced at a fête given by the Prince de Ligne, Marianne de Camargo made her first appearance at the Brussels theatre, where she reigned for three years as first *dansuse*. Her true theatre was not

there; in spite of her triumph at Brussels, her imagination always carried her to Paris; notwithstanding when she quitted Brussels she went to Rouen. Finally, after a long residence in that city, she was permitted to make her first appearance at the opera. It was on the 5th of May, 1726, for the famous day of her début has not been forgotten, that she appeared with all the brilliancy of sixteen upon the first stage in the world. Mademoiselle Prévost, already jealous, from a presentiment perhaps, had advised her to make her first appearance in the *Characters of the Dance*, a step almost impossible, which the most celebrated dancers hardly had dared to attempt, at the height even of their reputation. Mademoiselle de Camargo, who danced like a fairy, surpassed all her predecessors; her triumph was so brilliant that on the next day all the fashions took their name after her: hair *à la Camargo*, dresses *à la Camargo*, sleeves *à la Camargo*. All the ladies of the court imitated her grace; there were not a few that would have liked to have copied her face.

I have not told all yet: Mademoiselle de Camargo was made by love and for love. She was beautiful and pretty at the same time. There could be nothing so sweet and impassioned as her dark eyes, nothing so enchanting as her sweet smile? Lancret, Pater, J. B. Vanloo, all the painters that were then celebrated, tried to portray her charming face.

On the second night of Mademoiselle de Camargo's appearance on the stage, there were twenty duels and quarrels without end at the door of the opera; every one wanted to get in. Mademoiselle Prévost, alarmed at such a triumph, intrigued with such success that

Mademoiselle de Camargo was soon forced to fall back to the position of a mere *figurante*. She and her admirers had reason to be indignant. She was obliged to resign herself to dancing unobserved with the company. But she was not long in avenging herself with effect. One day, while she was dancing with a group of demons, Dumoulin, called the devil, did not make his appearance to dance his solo, when the musicians had struck up, expecting his entrance. A sudden inspiration seizes Mademoiselle de Camargo; she leaves the other *figurantes*, she springs forward to the middle of the stage, and improvises Dumoulin's *pas de seul*, but with more effect and capricious variety. Applause re-echoed throughout the theatre. Mademoiselle de Prévost swore that she would ruin her youthful rival; but it was too late. Terpsichore was dethroned. Mademoiselle de Camargo was crowned on that day queen of the opera, absolute queen, whose power was unlimited!

She was the first who dared to make the discovery that her petticoats were too long. Here I will let Grimm have his say: "This useful invention, which puts the amateur in the way of forming an intelligent judgment of the legs of a dancing-girl, was thought at that time to be the cause of a dangerous schism. The Jansenists of the pit exclaimed heresy, scandal; and were opposed to the shortened petticoats. The Molinists, on the contrary, held that this innovation was in character with the spirit of the primitive church, which was opposed to the sight of pinnettes and pigeon-wings, embarrassed by the length of a petticoat. The Sorbonne of the opera had for a long time great trouble in establishing the wholesome

doctrine on this point of discipline, which so much divided the faithful.”

Monsieur Ferdinand de Camargo grew old with a severe anxiety about the virtue and the salary of his daughter: he only preserved the salary. Intoxicated with her triumph, Mademoiselle de Camargo listened too willingly to all the lords of the court that frequented the company of the actresses behind the scenes; it would have been necessary for the king to appoint an historiographer, in order to record all the passions of this *danseuse*. There was a time when all the world was in love with her. Every one swore by Camargo; every one sang of Camargo; every one dreamed about Camargo. The madrigals of Voltaire and of the gallant poets of that gallant era are not forgotten.

However, the glory of Mademoiselle de Camargo was extinguished by degrees. Like fashion that had patronised her, she passed away by degrees, never to return. When she insisted upon retiring, although she was only forty years of age, no one thought of preventing her: she was hardly regretted. There was no inquiry made as to whither she had gone; she was only spoken of at rare intervals, and then she was only alluded to as a memory of the past. She had become something of a devotee, and very charitable. She knew by name all the poor in her neighborhood. She occasionally was visited by some of the notabilities of a past day, forgotten like herself.

In the *Amusements of the Heart and Mind*, a collection designed, as is well known, to form the mind and the heart, Mademoiselle de Camargo is

charged with having had a thousand and more lovers! Without giving the lie to this accusation, can I not prove it false by relating, in all its simplicity, a fact which proves a profound passion on her part? A pretty woman may dance at the opera, smile upon numberless admirers, live carelessly from day to day, in the noisy excitement of the world; still, there will be some blessed hours, when the heart, though often laid waste, will flourish again, all of a sudden. Love is like the sky, which looks blue, even when reflected in the stream formed by the storm. It is thus that love is occasionally found pure in a troubled heart. But, moreover, this serious passion of Mademoiselle de Camargo was experienced by her in all the freshness of her youth.

One morning, Grimm, Pont-de-Veyle, Duclos, Helvetius, presented themselves, in a gay mood, at the humble residence of the celebrated dancer. She was then living in an old house in the Rue Saint-Thomas-du-Louvre. An aged serving-woman opened the door.—“We wish to see Mademoiselle de Camargo,” said Helvetius, who had great difficulty in keeping his countenance. The old woman led them into a parlor that was furnished with peculiar and grotesque-looking furniture. The wainscoting was covered with pastels representing Mademoiselle de Camargo in all her grace, and in her different characters. But the parlor was not adorned by her portraits only: there was a *Christ on the Mount of Olives*, a *Magdalen at the Tomb*, a *Veiled Virgin*, a *Venus*, the *Three Graces*, some *Cupids*, half-concealed beneath some rosaries and sacred relics, and *Mulcennas*, covered with trophies from the opera!

The goddess of the place did not keep them a long time waiting: a door opened, half-a-dozen dogs of every variety of breed sprang into the parlor; it must be said, to the praise of Mademoiselle de Camargo, that these were not lap-dogs. She appeared behind them, carrying in her arms (looking like a fur muff) an Angora cat of fine growth. As she had not followed the fashion for ten years or more, she appeared to have come from the other world.—“You see, gentlemen,” pointing to her dogs, “all the court I have at present, but in truth those courtiers there are well worth all others. Here, Marquis! down, Duke! lie down, Chevalier! Do not be offended, gentlemen, that I receive you in such company: but how was I to know? . . .” —Grimm first spoke.—“You will excuse, mademoiselle, this unannounced visit when you know the important object of it.” —“I am as curious as if I were only twenty years old,” said Mademoiselle de Camargo; “but, alas! when I was twenty, it was the heart that was curious; but now, in the winter of life, I am no longer troubled on that score.” —“The heart never grows old,” said Helvetius, bowing.—“That is a heresy, sir: those only dare to advance such maxims who have never been in love. It is love that never grows old, for it dies in childhood. But the heart—” —“You see, madame, that your heart is still young; what you have just said proves that you are still full of fire and inspiration.” —“Yes, yes,” said Mademoiselle de Camargo, “you are perhaps right; but when the hair is gray and the wrinkles are deep, the heart is a lost treasure; a coin that is no longer current.” —While saying this, she lifted up Marquis by his two paws, and kissed

him on the head: Marquis was a fine setter-dog, with a beautiful spotted skin.—“They, at least, will love me to the last. But it seems to me we are talking nonsense; have we nothing better to talk about? Come, gentlemen, I am all attention!”

The visitors looked at each other with some embarrassment; they seemed to be asking of each other who was to speak first. Pont-de-Veyle collected his thoughts, and spoke as follows: “Mademoiselle, we have been breakfasting together; we had a gay time of it, like men of spirit. Instead of bringing before us, as the Egyptians in olden times, mummies, in order to remind us that time is the most precious of all things, we called up all those gay phantoms which enchanted our youth: need I say that you were not the least charming of them? who did not love you? who did not desire to live with you one hour, even at the expense of a wound? Happiness never costs too much—” Mademoiselle Camargo interrupted the speaker: “O gentlemen, do not, I beg, blind me with the memory of the past; do not awaken a buried passion! Let me die in peace! See, the tears are in my eyes!”—The visitors affected looked with a certain degree of emotion at the poor old lady who had loved so much.—“It is strange,” said Helvetius to his neighbor, “we came here to laugh, but we are travelling quite another road; however, I must say, nothing could be more ludicrous than such a caricature, if it were not of a woman.”—“Proceed, sir,” said Mademoiselle de Camargo to Pont-de-Veyle.—“To tell you the truth, madame, the worst fellow in the company, or rather he who had drank the most, declared that he was, of all your lovers, the one

you most loved.—‘The mere talk of a man who has had too much wine,’ said one of us. But our impertinent emptied his glass, and backed his statement. The discussion became very lively. We talked, we drank, and we talked. When the last bottle was empty, and the dispute was likely to end in a duel, and we talked without knowing, probably, what we said, the most sober of the company proposed to go and ask you yourself which of your lovers you loved the most. Is it the Comte de Melun? is it the Duke de Richelien? is it the Marquis de Croismare? the Baron de Viomesnil? the Viscount de Jumilhac? is it Monsieur de Beaumont, or Monsieur d’Aubigny? is it a poet? is it a soldier? is it an abbé?”—“Pshaw! pshaw!” said Mademoiselle de Camargo, smiling; “you had better refer to the *Court Calendar*!”—“What we want to know is not the names of those who have loved you, but, I repeat, the name of him whom you loved the most.”—“You are fools,” said Mademoiselle de Camargo, with an air of sadness, and a voice that showed emotion; “I will not answer you. Let us leave our extinct passions in their tombs, in peace. Why bury all those charming follies which have had their day?”—“Come,” says Grimm to Duclos, “do not let us grow sentimental; that would be too absurd. Mademoiselle de Camargo,” said he, playing with the dogs at the same time, “which was the epoch of short petticoats? for that is one of the points of our philosophical dispute.”

The aged *dansense* did not answer. Taking Pont-de-Veyle by the hand, all of a sudden, she said in rising: “Monsieur, follow me.”—He obeyed with some surprise. She conducted him to her bedchamber; it

was like a basket of odds and ends ; it looked like a linendraper's shop in confusion ; it was all disorder ; it was quite evident that the dogs were at home there. Mademoiselle de Camargo went to a little rosewood chest of drawers, covered with specimens of Saxony porcelain, more or less chipped and broken. She opened a little ebony box, exposing its contents to the eyes of Pont-de-Veyle.—“Do you see?” said she, with a sigh. Pont-de-Veyle saw a torn letter, the dry bouquet of half a century, the kind of flowers of which it was composed could hardly be recognised.—“Well?” asked Pont-de-Veyle.—“Well, do you understand?”—“Not at all.”—“Look at that portrait.”—She pointed with her finger to a wretched portrait in oils, covered with dust and spider's web.—“I begin to understand.”—“Yes,” said she, “that is his portrait. As for myself, I never look at it. The one here,” striking her breast, “is more like. A portrait is a good thing for those who have no time for memory.”

Pont-de-Veyle looked in turn with much interest at the letter, the faded bouquet, and the wretched portrait.—“Have you ever met this person?”—“Never.”—“Let us return, then.”—“No ; I beg let me hear the story.”—“Is it not enough to have seen his portrait? You can now settle your dispute with a word, since you know whether he whom I loved the most resembles your friend who had taken so much wine.”—“He does not resemble him the least in the world.”—“Well, that is all : I forgive your visit. Farewell ! When you breakfast with your friends, you can take up my defence somewhat. You can tell those libertines without pity, that I have saved myself by my

heart, if we can be saved that way . . . Yes, yes ; it is my plank of safety, in the wreck !”

Saying these words, Mademoiselle de Camargo approached the door of the saloon. Pont-de-Veyle followed her, carrying the ebony-box.—“Gentlemen,” said he, to his merry friends, “our drunken toper was a coxcomb ; I have seen the portrait of the best beloved of the goddess of this mansion ; now, you must join your prayers to mine, to prevail upon Mademoiselle de Camargo to relate to us the romance of her heart ; I only know the preface, which is melancholy and interesting ; I have seen a letter, a bouquet, and a portrait.”—“I will not tell you a word, muttered she ; “women are charged with not being able to keep a secret ; there is, however, more than one that they never tell. A love-secret is a rose which embalms our hearts ; if it is told, the rose loses its perfume. I who address you,” said Mademoiselle de Camargo, in brightening up, “I have only kept my love in all its freshness by keeping it all to myself. There were only La Carton and that old rogue Fontenelle who ever got hold of my secret. Fontenelle was in the habit of dining frequently with me ; one day, finding me in tears, he was so surprised, he who never wept himself, from philosophy doubtless, that he tormented me for more than an hour for a solution of the enigma. He was almost like a woman ; he drew from me, by his cat-like worrying, the history of my love. Would you believe it ? I hoped to touch his heart, but it was like speaking to the deaf. After having listened to the end without saying a word, he muttered with his little weak voice, ‘*It is pretty !*’—La Carton, however, wept with me. It is

worth being a poet and a philosopher in order not to understand such histories."

Mademoiselle de Camargo was silent; a deep silence followed, and every look was upon her.—“Speak, speak! we are all attention,” said Helvetius, “we are more worthy of hearing your story than the old philosopher who loved no one but himself.”—“After all,” she replied, carried away by the delight of her remembrance, “it will be spending a happy hour; I speak of myself, and as for happy or unhappy hours, not many more are to pass during my life, for I feel that I am passing away. But I do not know how to begin; a fire flashes before my eyes; I can not see, I am so overcome. To begin: I was twenty But I shall never have the courage to read my history aloud before so many people.” “Fancy, Mademoiselle de Camargo,” said Helvetius, “that you are reading a romance.”—“Well, then,” said she, “I will begin without ceremony.”

“I was twenty years old. You are all aware, for the adventure caused a great deal of scandal, you all know how the Count de Melun carried me off one morning along with my sister Sophy. This little mad-cap, who had a great deal of imagination, having discovered me reading a letter of the count’s, in which he spoke of his design, she swore upon her thirteen years that he must carry her off too. I was far from conceding any such claim. It is always taken for granted that children know nothing; but at the opera, and in love, there are no children. The Count de Melun, by means of a bribe, had gained over the chambermaid. I was very culpable; I knew all, and had not informed my father.

But my father wearied me somewhat; he preached in the desert; that is to say, he preached to me about virtue. He was always talking to me about our noble descent, of our cousin, who was a cardinal, of our uncle, who was a grand inquisitor of the Inquisition. Vanity of vanities! all was vanity with him, while with me all was love. I did not trouble myself about being of an illustrious family; I was handsome, I was worshipped, and, what was still better, I was young.

“In the middle of the night I heard my door open; it was the Count de Melun. I was not asleep, I was expecting him. It is not every woman who would like it that is run away with. I was going to be run away with.

“Love is not only charming in itself, it is so also from its romance. A passion without adventure is like a mistress without caprice. I was seated upon my bed. ‘Is it you, Jacqueline?’ I said, affecting fright. ‘It is I,’ said the count, falling upon his knees. ‘You, sir! Your letter was not a joke then?’ ‘My horses are at hand; there is no time to lose; leave this sad prison: my hotel, my fortune, my heart, all are at your service.’ At that moment a light appeared at the door. ‘My father!’ I cried, with affright, as I concealed myself behind the bed-curtains. ‘All is lost,’ muttered the count. It was Sophie. I recognised her light step. She approached with the light in her hand, and in silence, toward the count. ‘My sister,’ said she, with some degree of excitement, but without losing her presence of mind, ‘here I am, all ready.’ I did not understand; I looked at her with surprise; she was all dressed, from head to foot. ‘What are you saying? You are mad.

‘Not by any means: I want to be run away with, like yourself.’ The Count de Melun could not help laughing. ‘Mademoiselle,’ he said to her, ‘you forget your dolls and toys. ‘Sir,’ replied she, ‘with dignity, ‘I am thirteen years old. It was not yesterday that I made my *début* at the opera; I take a part on the stage in the ravishment of *Psyche*.’ ‘Good,’ says the count, ‘we will carry you off too.’ ‘It is as well,’ whispered the count in my ear; ‘this is the only way of getting rid of her.’

“I was very much put out by this *contretemps*, which gave a new complication to our adventure. My father might forgive my being carried off, but Sophie! I tried to dissuade her from her mad enterprise. I offered her my ornaments; she would not listen to reason. She declared, that if she was not carried off with me she would inform against us, and thus prevent the adventure. ‘Do not oppose her,’ said the count; ‘with such a tendency she will be sure to be carried off, sooner or later.’—‘Well, let us depart together.’ The chambermaid, who had approached with the stealthy, quiet step of a cat, told us to hurry, for she was afraid that the noise of the horses, that were pawing the ground near by, would awaken Monsieur de Camargo. We were off; the carriage drove us to the count’s hotel, rue de la Culture-Saint-Gervais. Sophie laughed and sung. In the morning I wrote to the manager of the opera, that by the advice of my physician it was impossible for me to appear for three weeks. To tell you the truth, gentlemen, in a week’s time I went myself to inform the manager that I would dance that evening. This, you perceive, is not very flattering to the Count de

Melum; but there are so few men in this world who are sufficiently interesting for a week together. I loved the count, doubtless, but I wanted to breathe a little without him. I desired the excitement of the theatre. I opened my window, constantly, as if I would fly out of it.

“As soon as I appeared at the opera my father followed my track, and discovered the retreat of his daughters. One evening behind the scenes, he went straight to the count, and insulted him. The count answered him, with great deference, that he would avoid the chance of taking the life of a gallant gentleman who had given birth to such a daughter as I was. My father did his best to prove and establish his sixteen quarterings, the count was not willing to fight him. It was about that time that my father presented his famous petition to the Cardinal de Fleury: “Your petitioner would state to the Lord Cardinal, that the Count de Melun, having carried off his two daughters in the night, between the 10th and 11th of the month of May, 1728, holds them imprisoned in his hotel, rue de la Culture-Saint-Gervais. Your petitioner having to do with a person of rank, is obliged to have recourse to his majesty’s ministers; he hopes, through the goodness of the king, justice will be done him, and that the Count de Melun will be commanded to espouse the elder daughter of your petitioner, and endow the younger.”

“A father could not have done better. The Cardinal de Fleury amused himself a good deal with the petition, and recommended me, one day that we were supping together, for full penance, to make over to my father my salary at the opera. But I find I am

not getting on with my story. But what would you have? The beginning is always where we dwell with the greatest pleasure. I had been living in the count's hotel a year; Sophie had returned to my father's house, where she did not remain long; but it is not her history that I am relating. One morning a cousin of the count arrived at the hotel in a great bustle; he was about spending a season in Paris, in all the wildness of youth. He took us by surprise at breakfast; he took his seat at table, without ceremony, on the invitation of the count.

"In the beginning he did not strike my fancy; I thought him somewhat of a braggadocio. He cultivated his mustachios with great care (the finest mustachios in the world), and spoke quite often enough of his prowess in battle. Some visiter interrupting us, the count went into his library, and left us together, *tête-à-tête*. Monsieur de Martaille's voice, until then proud and haughty in its tone, softened a little. He had at first looked at me with the eye of a soldier; he now looked at me with the eye of a pupil.—'Excuse, madame,' said he, with some emotion, 'my rude soldier-like bearing; I know nothing of fine manners; I have never passed through the school of gallantry. Do not be offended at anything I may say.'—'Why, sir,' said I, smiling, 'you do not say anything at all.'—'Ah, if I knew how to speak! but, in truth, I would feel more at home before a whole army than I do before your beautiful eyes. The count is very happy in having such a beautiful enemy to contend with.'—While speaking thus, he looked at me with a supplicating tenderness which contrasted singularly with his look of the hero. I do not know

what my eyes answered him. The count then came in, and the conversation took another turn.

“Monsieur de Martaille accepted the earnest invitation of his cousin to stay at his hotel. He went out; I did not see him again till evening. He did not know who I was; the count called me Marianne, and, unintentionally, perhaps, he had not spoken a word to his cousin about the opera, or my grace and skill as a dancer. At supper, Monsieur de Martaille had no longer the same frank gayety of the morning; a slight uneasiness passed like a cloud over his brow; more than once I caught his melancholy glance.—‘Cheer up your cousin,’ I said to the count.—‘I know what he wants,’ answered Monsieur de Melun; ‘I will take him to-morrow to the opera. You will see that in that God-forsaken place he will find his good humor again.’—I felt jealous, without asking myself why.

“Next day the *Triumph of Bacchus* was played. I appeared as Ariadne, all covered with vine-leaves and flowers. I never danced so badly. I had recognised Monsieur de Martaille among the gentlemen of the court. He looked at me with a serious air. I had hoped to have had an opportunity to speak with him before the end of the ballet, but he had already gone. I was offended at his abrupt departure.—‘How!’ said I to myself, ‘he sees me dance, and this is the way he makes me his compliments.’—Next morning, he breakfasted with us; he did not say a word about the evening; finally, not being able to resist my impatience, ‘Well, Monsieur de Martaille,’ said I to him, somewhat harshly, ‘you left early last night; it was hardly polite

of you.'—'Ah! when you were to dance no more!' said he with a sigh. This was the first time that I was ever spoken to thus. Fearing that he had said too much, and in order to divert Monsieur de Melan, who observed him with a look of surprise, he began to speak of a little singer of no great moment, who had a voice of some freshness.

"In the afternoon, the count detained at home for some reason or other, begged his cousin to accompany me in a ride to the woods. He was to join us on horseback. The idea of this ride made my heart beat violently. It was the first time that I had listened with pleasure to the beatings of my heart.

"We started on a fine summer's day. Everything was like a holyday: the sky, the houses, the trees, the horses, and the people. A veil had fallen from my eyes. For some minutes we remained in the deepest silence; not knowing what to do, I amused myself by making a diamond that I wore glisten in the rays of the sun that entered the carriage. Monsieur de Martelle caught hold of my hand. We both said not a word the whole time. I tried to disengage my hand; he held it the harder. I blushed: he turned pale. A jolt of the carriage occurred very opportunely to relieve us from our embarrassment; the jolt had lifted me from my seat; it made me fall upon his bosom.—'Monsieur,' said I, starting.—'Ah, madame, if you knew how I love you!'—He said this with a tenderness beyond expression: it was love itself that spoke! I had no longer the strength to get angry. He took my hand again and devoured it with kisses. He did not say another word; I tried to speak, but did not know

what to say myself. From time to time our looks met each other; it was then that we were eloquent. Such eternal pledges, such promises of happiness!

“Notwithstanding, we arrived at the woods. All of a sudden, as if seized with a new idea, he put his head out of the window, and said something to the coachman. I understood, by the answer of *La Violette*, the coachman, that he was not willing to obey; but *Monsieur de Martaille* having alluded to a caning and fifty pistoles, the coachman made no further objections. I did not understand very well what he was about. After an hour’s rapid travelling, as I was looking with some anxiety as to where we were, he tried to divert me by telling me some episodes of his life. Although I did not listen very intelligently to what he said, I heard enough to find out that I was the first woman he had ever loved. They all say so, but he told the truth, for he spoke with his eyes and his heart. I soon found out that we were no longer on our right road; but observe how far the feebleness of a woman in love will go: I had n’t the courage to ask him why he had changed our route. We crossed the *Seine* in a boat, between *Sèvres* and *St. Cloud*; we regained the woods, and after an hour’s ride through them, we reached an iron park gate, at the extremity of the village of *Velaisy*.

“*Monsieur de Martaille* had counted without his lost. He expected not to have found a soul in his brother’s chateau, but, since the evening before, his brother had returned from a journey to the coast of France. Seeing that the chateau was inhabited, *Monsieur de Martaille* begged me to wait a little in

the carriage. As soon as he had gone, the coachman came to the door.—‘Well, madame, we breathe at last! my opinion is that we should make our escape. Depend upon the word of La Violette, we shall be in less than two hours at the hotel.’—‘La Violette,’ said I, ‘open the door.’—I ran a great risk. La Violette obeyed.—‘Now,’ said I to him, when I had alighted upon the ground, ‘you may go!’—He looked at me with the eye of an old philosopher, mounted his box, and snapped his whip; but he had hardly started, when he thought it better to return.—‘I will not return without madame, for if I return alone, I shall be sure of a good beating, and of being discharged.’—‘Indeed, La Violette! as you please.’—At that moment, I saw the count returning.—‘It is all for the best,’ he cried out, in the distance; ‘my brother has only two days to spend in Paris: he has stopped here to give his orders; he wishes, at all hazards, to see Camargo dance! I told him that she was to appear this evening. He will leave in a moment. You must wait in the park till he is gone. I will return to him, for I must take my leave of him, and wish him a pleasant journey.’

“An hour afterward we were installed in the chateau. La Violette remained, at our order, with his carriage and horses. In the evening there was great excitement at the opera. It was solemnly announced to the public that Mademoiselle de Camargo had been carried off! The Count de Melm, surprised at not finding us in the woods, had gone to the theatre. He was hissed; he swore revenge. He sought everywhere; he found neither his horses, nor his carriage, nor his mistress. For three months the opera was in

mourning! Thirty bailiffs were on my track; but we made so little noise in our little chateau, hid away in the woods, that we were never discovered."

Mademoiselle de Camargo became pale: she was silent, and looked at her listeners as if she would say by her looks that had been lighted up at that celestial flame which had passed over her life: "Oh, how we loved each other during those three months!"

She continued as follows: "That season has filled a greater space in my life than all the rest of my days. When I think of the past, it is there where my thoughts travel at once. How relate to you the particulars of our happiness? When destiny protects us, happiness is composed of a thousand charming nothings that the hearts of others can not understand. During those three months I was entirely happy; I wished to live for ever in this charming retreat for him that I loved a thousand times more than myself. I wished to abandon the opera, that opera that the Count de Melun could not make me forget for a week!

"Monsieur de Martaille possessed all the attraction of a real passion; he loved me with a charming simplicity; he put in play, without designing it, all the seductions of love. What tender words! what impassioned looks! what enticing conversation? Each day was a holyday, each hour a rapture. I had no time to think of the morrow.

"Our days were spent in walks, in the shade of the woods, in the thousand windings of the park. In the evening I played the harpsichord, and I sang. It often occurred that I danced, danced for him. In the middle of a dance that would have excited a fu-

ror at the opera, I fell at his feet, completely overcome; he raised me up, pressed me to his heart and forgave me for having danced. I always hear his beautiful voice, which was like music, but such music as I dream of, and not such as Rameau has composed But now I am speaking without knowing what I say."

Mademoiselle de Camargo turned toward Pont-de-Veyle. "Monsieur," said she, "open that box or rather hand it to me." She took the box, opened it, and took the bouquet from it. "But above all, gentlemen, I must explain to you why I have preserved this bouquet." While saying this, she attempted to smell the vanished odor of the bouquet.

"One morning," she resumed, "Monsieur de Martelle awoke me early — 'Farewell!' he said, pale and trembling. — 'What are you saying?' cried I with affright. — 'Alas,' replied he, embracing me, 'I did not wish to tell you before, but for a fortnight I have had orders to leave. Hostilities are to be resumed in the Low Countries; I have no longer a single hour either for you or for me; I have over forty leagues to travel to day.' — 'Oh, my God, what will become of me?' said I weeping. 'I will follow you.' — 'But, my dear Marianne, I shall return.' — 'You will return in an age! Go, cruel one, I shall be dead when you return.'

"An hour was spent in taking leave and in tears; he was obliged to go; he went.

"I returned to weep in that retreat, that was so delightful the evening before. Two days after his departure, he wrote me a very tender letter, in which he told me that on the next day, he would have the

consolation of engaging in battle. ‘I hope,’ added he, ‘that the campaign will not be a long one; some days of hard fighting and then I return to your feet.’ What more shall I tell you? He wrote me once again.”

Mademoiselle de Camargo, unfolded slowly, the torn letter. “Here is the second letter:—

Oct. 17.

“‘No, I shall not return, my dear, I am going to die, but without fear, without reproach. Oh! if you were here, Marianne! What madness! in an hospital where, all of us, all, be we what we may, are disfigured with wounds, and dying! What an idea to dash ahead in the fight, when I only thought of seeing you again. As soon as I was wounded, I asked the surgeon if I should live long enough to reach Paris: ‘You have but an hour,’ he answered me pitilessly . . . They brought me here with the others. In a word, we should learn to resign ourselves, to what comes from Heaven. I die content with having loved you; console yourself; return to the opera. I am not jealous of those who shall succeed me, for will they love you as I have done? Farewell, Marianne, death approaches, and death never waits; I thank it for having left me sufficient time to bid you farewell. Now, it will be I who will wait for you.

“‘Farewell, farewell, I press you to my heart which ceases to beat.’”

After having wiped her eyes, Mademoiselle de Camargo continued as follows: “Shall I describe to you all my sorrows, all my tears, all my anguish! Alas! as he had said, I returned to the opera. I did not forget Monsieur de Martelle, in the tempest of

my folly. Others have loved me. I have loved no one but Monsieur de Martaille: his memory has beamed upon my life like a blessing from heaven. When I reappeared at the opera, I was seen attending mass; I was laughed at for my devotion. They did not understand, philosophers as they were, that I prayed to God, in consequence of those words of Monsieur de Martaille: 'Now it will be I who will wait for you.'

"When I left the chateau, I plucked a bouquet in the park, thinking that I was plucking the flowers that had bloomed for him; I brought away this bouquet, along with the portrait that you see there. I had vowed, in leaving our dear retreat, to go every year, at the same season, to gather a bouquet in the park. Will you believe it? I never went there again!"

Mademoiselle de Camargo, thus finished her history. "Well, my dear philosopher," said, Helvetius to Duclos, in descending the steps, "you have just read a book that is somewhat curious."—"A bad book," answered Duclos, "but such books are always interesting."

In April, 1770, the news spread that Mademoiselle de Camargo had just died a good catholic. "This created a great surprise," says a journal of the day, "in the republic of letters, for she was supposed to have been dead twenty years." Her last admirer and her last friend, to whom she had bequeathed her dogs and her cats, had caused her body to be interred with a magnificence unexampled at the opera. "All the world," says Grimm, "admired that white pall, the symbol of chastity, that all unmarried persons are entitled to in their funeral ceremony."

MADemoiselle GUILMARD.

(A GODDESS OF THE OPERA.)

To the storyteller the eighteenth century is inexhaustible. One who merely stops at the surface, judges it at a single glance—a superannuated mythology in the arts, licentious amours in the world of fashion, golden days at court; but one who descends a little way into the gloom of that yet palpitating past, who resolutely shakes the dust from the volumes of a century, who studies at Versailles and elsewhere the faces of Louis XV.'s court, who seeks to read into those hearts hidden beneath the roses of the bodice—he will discover a whole comedy *in a hundred various acts*, played in open day in a thousand curious scenes—the eternal comedy of life, but more artlessly mad than ever. Thus far, I have endeavored to paint the most intelligent of the group, those who exhibit the radiance of poetry in every view; I have yet more than one study to make, and since I have spoken of the theatre, may I not sketch the profiles of some of those actresses, who, from Camargo to Guimard, form, as the Gentil-Bernard said, a garland of love? We shall see that, far from being misplaced in the human com-

edy, the jesters held there, as in our own days, the best places in point of notoriety and wealth. At the time that Boissy was dying of misery (not like Malfilâtre, who, at least, died alone, but) with his wife and children, the actress, who played his pieces was spattering twenty poets with her coaches. At the time when Grétry, Lantara, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, were living on condition of dining out, Mademoiselle Guimard had a palace, and gave a supper to a prince and a duke; I need not add that the musician, the companion of her glory at the opera, was not invited to the supper. But all this false notoriety and false éclat at last gave place to a worthier glory, when death came to assign every one his place. To-day, the poet or musician still charms us, but who remembers the dancer or singer that spattered him? A case in point. It is not a month since Mademoiselle Thévenin (who at this day knows Mademoiselle Thévenin, the rival of Duthé?) died at Fontainebleau, at the age of ninety-two. A crowd of noble lords and bankers had ruined themselves for her at the will of her caprice. She died a millionaire and a miser, without thinking of God or the poor. She had no heir, and she made no will, as if the bare idea of giving away after her death would have cost her too much. Mademoiselle Thévenin left an income of fifty thousand livres to the state. To be sure, the state is the chief pauper in the kingdom.

God forbid that I should ever linger over such a portrait. If I have brought forward that horrible death, it is to avenge in broad day the poor whom that woman disinherited during her life and after

her death. I choose my models better. More than one lovely face may be detached from the gallery of the opera. By the side of Mademoiselle Thévenin, who was a miser, we find Mademoiselle Guimard, who was a prodigal.

Mademoiselle Guimard played a great part during her life, at the opera, in the city, and at court. At first she danced, then it was love, love, always love. A hundred marquises ruined themselves for her; but what will seem much more surprising, she almost ruined a farmer of the revenue. A farmer of the revenue! You know they were all as rich as a hundred marquises. I will not tell you the names of her lovers, I should not find time and space; know only that she counted dukes and princes among the most persevering: for instance, the Duke d'Orleans and the Prince de Soubise. The latter, especially, was very obstinate; he persisted in giving her a great deal of money. Guimard was prevailed upon to pocket, on various occasions, an income of from three to four hundred thousand francs, on condition of making a good use of it. Sometimes she built a palace, sometimes she gave large alms to the poor of her neighborhood. Grimm gives an account of one of her charities. During the severe cold of 1768, she took some money without counting it—nearly eight hundred francs; she set out all alone without saying anything to any one, mounted into the garrets in her neighborhood, found out all those who were suffering from the rigor of the season, and gave to every family without bread, enough to live on for a year. Was not that the kindly dew of which the Scripture speaks? That was something to enoble

her pirouettes. Moved to tears at this good deed, Marmontel addressed a long epistle to the dancer; — we should mention that he often dined at Mademoiselle Guimard's. This action made considerable noise; a preacher spoke of it in his sermon, not failing to bring forward, in connection with the subject, the sublime picture of the penitent Magdalen. "It is not yet the penitent Magdalen!" he exclaimed; "but it is even now the charitable Magdalen! The hand that performs such acts of charity will not be disregarded by Saint Peter, when it knocks at the gate of Paradise." Grimm, seeing everybody affected, said in his journal: "For my part, I desire to play here the part of that good village-curate, who, when he had preached to his rustic congregation on the passion of our Lord, and saw them all weeping at the excess of his sufferings, was loath to send them home so afflicted, and said to them: 'My children, do not weep so much, for, perhaps, all this is not true!'" The story is true in every particular, the more so that Guimard never said a word about it; it was the police who bore witness to all her acts of kindness. Besides, Grimm was one of Guimard's distant admirers. "I have always loved her tenderly," he wrote to the king of Prussia. "They say that the sound of her voice is rough and harsh; to my ears it is a grievous wrong; but as I have never heard her speak, that defect has not been able to diminish my passion for her."

We may reasonably be astonished at this dancer's wonderful conquests; but on the subject of love we need be astonished at nothing. As soon as we attempt to reason upon it we are all astray. Not on-

ly was Guimard not beautiful, but she was not even pretty. It must be confessed that she had that indefinable something which seduces, without the mind or heart knowing why. Love is not blind for nothing, and Mademoiselle Guimard possessed, in a greater degree than any other of her class, the art of putting a bandage over the eyes that looked at her. She was thin for a dancer; so much so, that her charitable companions surnamed her *the spider*, and truly her dancing reminded one rather of the skips of a father long-legs. Apart from the skips, she excelled in the rigodoon, the tambourine dance, the *loure*, in all that was called the high style. More than once she created a furor in the *gargouillade*; she was wonderful in pironettes; but her real triumph was in the fancy-dance, and it was for her that the *Caprices de Galathée* was composed. Her most marked feature was her affectation; she danced as Sterne wrote; so Sterne who saw her during his travels in France, declared her the most false, the loosest, the most mannered of dancers. Happily for her, every one was not of Sterne's opinion. Her admirers said in so many words: "She is voluptuousness personified; she unites the three Graces in her own person." Mademoiselle Arnould who was listened to as an oracle in that perverted world, rather counterbalanced these eulogiums by her sarcasms. M. de Jarente, bishop more or less of a diocese where he never showed himself, was in love with Mademoiselle Guimard. Thanks to him, she had, according to his expression, entered into orders; and she held the *benefice leaf*. Hence that jest of Mademoiselle Arnould's: "I can't conceive how that little silkworm

is so thin, she feeds on so rich a leaf." Mademoiselle Guinard replied to this spiteful saying by an abusive letter, in which Sophie Arnould was accused of having committed the seven capital sins seven times a day. Sophie Arnould replied with these three words: "I double you."

Guinard, however, laughed gayly at compliments or sarcasms. Her thoughts were far more occupied with changing a carriage, building a palace, or doing an act of charity. All the journals of the time talked of her house, called the *Temple of Terpsichore*. Ancient history speaks of the courtesan Rhodope, who built one of the most famous pyramids of Egypt, with the money obtained from her lovers; Guinard built a palace in the Chaussée-d'Antin, where more treasures were swallowed up than would have sufficed to build twenty pyramids. The temple of Terpsichore contained, besides the large and small apartments of the goddess, a summer-garden, and a winter-garden, a library of bad books, a gallery of pictures on subjects of gallantry, and a theatre where the king's players in ordinary, and all the talent of the strolling companies, were delighted to act. There was also a Paphian temple, and there was always somebody at the door. "A prohibition from the gentlemen of the chamber was necessary," said a journal, "to prevent the leading actors of the French and Italian theatres from playing at Mademoiselle Guinard's; because, afterward, they took their repose and did not play for the public." The dancer, accustomed as she was to queenly command, braved the prohibition; she was threatened with the royal indignation, but she replied to the threat by giving

at her house the parody of a court fête. Although a king of France might then know how to squander money by the handful, the parody was more brilliant than the fête itself. Shows, dances, feasting, follies of every age and country, nothing was wanting, scandal least of all.

Would it be believed? The queen, Marie-Antoinette, who, like so many others, had touched with her lips the fatal cup with which that giddy, pirouetting, witty, and fickle age was intoxicating itself, called Guimard, without ceremony and without thinking twice on the matter, to her toilet councils. It usually happened that Guimard was president of the council, even in the presence of the lady of honor, the Princess de Chimay, the lady of the bedchamber, the Countess d'Ossun, and the lady of the palace, the Marchioness de la Roche-Aymon. The superintendent herself, the chief of the council, as she was then called, had not a word to say when Guimard appeared at Versailles. The queen had a blind confidence in the dancer's good taste. It was Mademoiselle Guimard here, Mademoiselle Guimard there: is my hair well dressed? do these roses look well in my bodice? The dancer replied without hesitation, pretty much as if she was speaking to Sophie Arnould; she knew that etiquette was banished from the court of France, after Madame Dubarry passed over the throne. Besides, she treated with the queen, almost like one power with another. Had not all the lords who fluttered at court, pirouetted at her house? did the luxury of the Trianon equal that of the temple of Terpsichore? Had the queen, like the dancer (dancer did I say?—goddess of the

dance), a winter-garden where the rarest plants were blooming?

Guimard was not ignorant of the price the queen set upon her counsels. So, one day that she was going to Fer-l'Evêque, she said to her *lady of honor*: "Do not cry, Gothon; I have written to the queen, that I had discovered a new style of dressing the hair; I shall be free before this evening."

A journal of the time, speaking of Guimard's hotel, says, that Love defrayed the expense, and Luxury drew the plan. "Never," adds this journal, "had those divinities in Greece a temple more worthy of their worship."—The dancer had her painter in ordinary; that painter was Fragonard. It was determined between the goddess and the artist, that the saloon should be made up entirely of painting, panels, ceiling, doors, and mirrors. Fragonard took his freshest and most seductive palette, his lightest and most graceful pencil. After two years' labor, he was not yet at the end of this work of gallantry; but he had made his way into the heart of Guimard; that, to be sure, was a reason why he should not finish. Wishing to paint Terpsichore in every aspect, and in all her attributes, he had often asked an audience of the dancer, who always sat with the best grace in the world.—"Well, Fragonard, what are we going to paint to-day?"—"Your smile, your lips, all the graces of your mouth."—"Flatterer!"—"Come, let us lose no time; a smile, if you please."—"Faith, I am not at all in the vein to-day."—"Nevertheless, we must come to the point."—"Do you think a person can smile without a cause?"—"When you dance the gargonillade, it seems to

me—"That is quite another affair; at the opera I am following my trade; I am quite sure that my pretty airs are not lost."—"Who knows, if they would be lost here?"—"You have given me an idea; well, my dear, make me smile; that is your business."—"Suppose I tell you some scandal about Sophie Arnould?"—"Say on."—"No; that is not the smile I want, for it is the voluptuous mouth I wish to paint just now."—"I suppose I have not got the virtuous mouth."

History has not recorded the rest of this conversation between the painter and the dancer. History always takes a long leap over the critical moments. All that I can say is, that the next day Fragonard was desperately in love, and hoped to have a good sitting; but the next day, a prince, a duke, a marquis, a farmer of the revenue, whom you will, came to ask an audience of Guimard. The painter had the folly to be jealous; he imagined he had claims upon that fickle heart. Not only was he jealous, but, to make the matter supremely ridiculous, he took a notion to tell the dancer so.—"Jealous!" she exclaimed, "jealous of me! really, that is too funny; my dear, you will make me die of laughing. In love—that is very well; but jealous! what folly!"—"Yes, I am jealous," said the painter in a pet; "I love you, and you shall love me, were it only for a week."—"A week! you do not know what you say; none of my lovers ever put forward such a pretension. A week! we might as well be married. You wanted a smile (to make a pretty portrait); did I not smile?"—"Yes, but a smile is not enough; I wish—"

Guimard rose haughtily; assumed her grand

queenly airs, and said to her painter in ordinary: "You wish! that word is not known here; it is not admitted into my dictionary. You think, perhaps, you are dealing with a common figurante of the opera. I advise you, Monsieur Fragonard, to gather up your brushes, and go and paint elsewhere. A pleasant journey to you! As for the money I owe you, you can talk to my steward about it."—"Farewell, Madame Goddess," said the painter, with dignity. He took his hat and bowed with an air of mockery. "Mirth and sport attend you; be ever fresh and smiling. But tell me, who will make that portrait smile?"—"Thank God! Monsieur Fragonard, I am not at the end of my smiles."—"He laughs well who laughs the last."

He departed quite convinced that Guinard, would recall him: for who would she find, unless it were Greuze, to finish that portrait worthily? Now, Greuze had quite different matters to attend to. The next day, Fragonard went to the window twenty times; always thinking that he heard the approach of the dancer's carriage. She did not recall him. The noise of his disgrace was hardly spread abroad, before three or four painters presented themselves to finish the saloon, if not the portrait. The dancer chose the most delicate and coquettish pencil; it was another pupil of Boucher, who created loves and scattered roses as if by enchantment. Perhaps, he had not all the grace of Fragonard, but the dancer, accustomed to operative decorations, did not take a close view of those matters. She was so well-contented with her new painter, that she commanded him to finish the portrait.—"I shall never dare to

ask you to sit for the smile."—"Take courage."—The young painter did not take the smile for her, as Fragonard had done; he took it for the portrait; he succeeded, by some means, in painting that mouth that had been the theme of all the madrigalists of the time.

But Fragonard, whose passion was now only a repressed anger, did not consider himself beaten. One day, more and more overcome by this anger, he ventured as far as the temple of Terpsichore, resolved to brave everything, even the haughty dancer herself. As he was going to enter, he saw the carriage of the goddess come out. He entered without ceremony; the attendants, left at liberty, had abandoned their posts, to chat in the neighborhood or in the pantry. Fragonard, who knew the road well, called no one to guide his steps in that labyrinth of love where every one found a thread to untwist. He reached the saloon without meeting a soul. The young painter had just stepped into the garden, which was a very garden of Armida; and, as he re-entered the house, he was disagreeably struck by the pretty smile of the portrait, which was still upon the easel.—"Really, she is charming. I should not have caught more grace and voluptuousness myself."

He looked at it with some surprise; the portrait seemed to look him in the face with an air of mockery. He walked for awhile in the saloon, a prey to a thousand ideas of vengeance. There was a palette and brushes in the room; his revenge is at hand. With three or four strokes of the brush he effaces the smile; he hits upon the expression of wrath and fury without injuring the resemblance of the portrait. Never was

sacrilege more suddenly consummated. Hardly had he given it the final touch, and was departing, better pleased than if he had produced a masterpiece, when he stopped in terror; he hears the sound of a carriage; it is Guinard returning with two lovers and a female friend, the latter something unusual. The dancer, delighted with her portrait, wished to judge of the delight of others. She entered the saloon in triumph; Fragonard, in despair, barely had time to crouch behind the easel.

“Look, prince! look how that portrait—” The dancer turned pale.—“Charming,” said the Prince de Soubise, who had not yet seen it.—“Stay!” said Guinard, “am I mad? can’t I see clear?”—“A very good likeness, really, my dear friend,” said Sophie Arnould.—“But don’t you see? it is all very well for you; you would pay a compliment to the three Fates. That little dauber has spoiled all. Was any one ever disfigured like that?”—“What does all this mean?” asked the Marquis de Bièvres.—“I do not understand it at all. Just now, I was smiling with all the grace in the world, but now—” —“But, my dear,” said Sophie Arnould, “I assure you, you are very like your portrait; it is the same wrath and the same passion; just look in the glass! Who knows but this portrait has the power to change its countenance, like the original?”—“The best of it is,” said the marquis, kissing the dancer’s hand, “that it is the only portrait like the original that I ever saw in my life. Look if it has not the appearance of bursting with rage. I have more than once had the distinguished advantage of seeing you in that line of your talents. Do not tell me of a por-

trait that smiles ; we smile to every one ; the smile is the bluntest of the arrows of love ; but we grant to very few the favor of seeing us in a passion."

History does not tell us whether the painter retouched the portrait.*

You have seen Guimard at court and in her palace. Would you like to see her at Longchamps the 29th of March, 1768? It happened, that on that day of the gloomy passion-week, there was the loveliest spring sunshine. All the magnificence of Versailles and Paris was splendidly spread out on the promenade ; but among all the carriages the most admired was Guimard's, drawn by four horses ; it was less a carriage than a car, "worthy," says a journal, "of containing the exquisite graces of the modern Terpsichore."—Nothing was wanting to that equipage, neither the most mettled and spirited horses, nor the prettiest paintings, nor the most enthusiastic adorers ; nothing was wanting, not even a coat-of-arms. In the middle of the scutcheon was seen a golden mark, whence issued a misletoe ; the graces acted as supporters, and the Loves crowned the

* This adventure has had a second edition. Girodet had painted the portrait of Mademoiselle Lange, another Guimard, rather less brilliant. The actress refused the portrait, saying it was not like her.—"No one would ever recognise me in that ugly face."—"Very well, mademoiselle, I shall find a way to make you recognised."—The angry painter set to work. He painted Mademoiselle Lange as Danaë ; but, instead of a shower of gold, it was a shower of crown-pieces that besprinkled the boudoir of this second Danaë. In one corner a turkey was strutting.—"Is it like you this time?" said the painter, who had greatly improved upon his model.—"Very like," said the actress, who did not understand the allegories at all. She hung the portrait up in her parlor, and, like Guimard, went to ask the opinion of her friends.—"Very like," exclaimed the lively company, bursting with laughter.

shield.—“Everything is ingenious in that emblem,” adds the journal.

It was not enough for Mademoiselle Guimard to have a temple at Paris; the queen had pleasure-houses; the goddess of the opera built a pleasure-house at Pantin. Hear Bachaumont: “*December 12th, 1768.* There is much talk of the magnificent spectacles given at her superb mansion at Pantin, by Mademoiselle Guimard, so renowned for the elegance of her taste, her unparalleled luxury, and the philosophers, wits, and people of talent, of every class, who compose her court, and make it the admiration of the age. Our good authors dispute with one another the privilege of being acted at her theatre, and for her amusement; and our celebrated actors, the privilege of playing to please her. The Prince de Soubise is always of the number of spectators. No one is admitted to these entertainments until after he has been admitted at court. The entertainments of Nero were not equal to these.”

Mademoiselle Guimard was celebrated, among other reasons, for her suppers, which were the most wonderful in Paris. She gave three a week, the first composed of the greatest lords of the court; the second of poets, artists, and *sarants*, who had eaten a bad supper the night before at Madame Geoffrin's; the third was not a supper, but an orgy composed of actresses of every sort, and people of every quality. Thus on Tuesday, this dancer queened it unceremoniously among the noblest names of France; on Thursday, she had a court of *sarants*, who talked to her of Sappho and Ninon; of artists who painted her in every style (Boucher metamorphosed her into

a shepherdess, and Fragonard into Diana the huntress); of poets like Dorat and Marmontel, who sang her graces with the same voice that they sang the praises of the queen. On Saturday, she constituted herself the goddess of pleasure and presided at the banquet of folly.

But *the destinies and the billows are changeable*. Six months after these wonders, Bachaumont inscribes on his tablets: "Mademoiselle Guimard, whose talents for dancing are the delight of Paris, is on the eve of bankruptcy; she has suspended—her entertainments." The Prince de Soubise having cause to complain of her, because she had three or four more lovers than usual, had just stopped her pension of a thousand crowns a week, which he had paid her for a long time. "And only to think," said the celebrated dancer, "that I want but four hundred thousand livres to appease a few of my creditors!" Bachaumont thus ends his page upon this great event, which occupied all Paris: "It is hoped that some English lord or German baron will come to the assistance of Terpsichore. A new shame for the French, if a stranger sets them that example!"

We are not at the end of the story. Mademoiselle Guimard could not console herself for the departure of the Prince de Soubise; in her grief she complained to the men who fluttered about her charms at the opera. She had not to complain long. She said one evening: "If I only had a hundred thousand livres to-morrow!" The next day, a magnificent carriage drawn by four horses, stops at her hotel; an unknown personage presents himself before the sovereign. "Mademoiselle, the hundred thousand livres

are there in my carriage; there are besides, thirty thousand livres for emergencies.”—“Very good, my lord,” exclaimed Mademoiselle Guimard; “I have no horses, drive yours into my stables.” Bachaumont does not fail to inscribe this adventure on his tablets. He adds: “We are not yet informed of the name of this magnificent personage, well worthy to be inscribed in the annals of Cythera. He is believed to be a stranger, which is a reproach to French gallantry.” Bachaumont would have done well to have ended here as above with an exclamation point.

This person, who remained unknown, carried his folly so far as to wish to marry Mademoiselle Guimard. Never did a woman show herself so frightened at such a proposition. It is true that the lover, not being able to prevail upon her by fair means, wished to compel her, pistol in hand. She had no other resource but to send her powerful friends to the lieutenant of police, to beseech him to protect her from such violence. The lieutenant of police was in great perplexity; if the lover proceeded to any extremity against the goddess of the opera, all Paris would be in revolution. He repaired in hot haste to Mademoiselle Guimard’s: “So, mademoiselle, he shows himself an insolent fellow.”—“Yes, sir, an insolent fellow who has the audacity to ask me in marriage—an I my own mistress?”—“No, you belong to all France. And as, in order to get married, you would have to renounce the opera, the devil, his pomps and works Don’t be alarmed, mademoiselle, we will watch over you.”—“But, M. Lieutenant of police, consider that his pistols are loaded. He hard-

ly grants me six weeks to make up my mind."—"Count upon us; in six weeks this ill-bred man shall be deprived of the pleasure of seeing you, even at the opera." The denouement was tragic. Having received orders to return instantly to Germany, this enraged German prince, who dared to pretend to the hand of a French dancer, departed, but carried off Guimard; who, probably, would never have been seen again at the opera, had not the Prince de Soubise pursued the ravisher with all the apparatus of war. The attack was spirited, the defence heroic. Three dead remained upon the field of battle; the ravisher was severely wounded, but Guimard was saved! The Prince de Soubise made himself master of the carriage in which she had fainted.

The Prince de Soubise then returned to her more desperately in love than ever; he even showed himself so jealous, that Monsieur de Bordes, who had ruined himself for the pleasure of being leader of the orchestra and chapel-master to the dancer, was requested not to present himself at her house for the future, after sunset.

And here may I not produce in evidence these two unpublished letters; the first to the Prince de Soubise, the second to Monsieur de Bordes?

"MY LORD AND MASTER: Is this, then, cruel one, the reward of all my sacrifices? What have I done for you? or rather what have I not done? What! you talk of abandoning me! Can I live without you? for have you not accustomed me to the expenses of royalty? It was well worth my while to sacrifice to you lords and barons who were willing to ruin themselves for me. Dear Soubise, believe me, I

loved you, I still love you, I will always love you, as the song says. It is all in vain ; I do not believe a word of your letter, nor you do not believe it either. You wished to laugh at my sorrows ; be content, I have wept. Yes, I have wept, and you know I am not a fountain of tears. What are my griefs ? Have I not become the slave of your caprices ? One evening, you remember, you wished (just as I was going to bed) that I should dance the *gargouillade*, in the most simple costume ; it was ridiculous for me, much more than for you, nevertheless, I danced. Could you be jealous of any one ? Does not your rank put you above such a prejudice ? Besides, you know, if I dance for everybody, my heart only dances for you. You look upon Monsieur de Bordes with an evil eye ; you are quite wrong ; Monsieur de Bordes is not a man, he is a musician. Marmontel gives you offence ; a poet ! Why, we don't rhyme together. To return to Monsieur de Bordes, do not forget that, to please you, I have forbidden him my door the moment the sun sets ; I had even given him his dismissal in due form, but the poor man would have died of grief ; he came, threw himself on his knees, and wept like a child ; for my part, I was quite softened, I burst out laughing, and I did not feel cruel enough to drive him away, for he said to me : ' Drive me away like a dog, if you will not see me any more.' You are very difficult to get along with, my dear Soubise. If you knew how well that poor man plays on the violin ! my feet are beginning a minuet at the very thought of it. Let us say no more about him ; I feel I am becoming sad. Come and see me ; I have no longer heart for anything ; I am capa

ble of proceeding to any extremity. Would you believe that I sometimes think of hiding myself in a convent? Ah! cruel one, how much more agreeable it would be for me to hide myself in your arms?

“GUIMARD.

“P. S.—If you will not come and see me, come at least and get your letters and purse. Alas! your purse is like your heart, there is nothing in it.”

“MY DEAR ORPHEUS: I was right when I told you the prince would be angry; he takes your affair quite seriously. You understand, my dear, that your heart is not inexhaustible, like Soubise’s purse. So let us stop where we are, and postpone our love to better times. In the meantime, try to console yourself; and as I have, perhaps, had a hand in ruining you, I have just set you down for a pension of twelve hundred livres for your pocket-money. For other matters I am not uneasy; you are a man too well bred not to get invitations to dinner and supper. Besides, a man who plays so well on the violin is never at a loss. In our old days, if Fortune turns her back upon us, we will unite our talents and our miseries. We must be prepared for everything, it is the philosopher’s rule; but for fear of moralizing, which I am not used to, I lay down my pen.

“GUIMARD.”

The Prince de Soubise had again become the very humble servant of all the dancer’s whims. She wished to have a right of chase, for herself and her friends, in the king’s hunting-grounds. The prince, who was captain of the royal forests, granted her one of the best cantons. She had herself painted

as Diana the huntress, and amused herself by delivering to the noblest lords permits to hunt.

She found great obstacles in the Duke de Richelieu and the archbishop of Paris, to the reopening of her city theatre; but as she had more friends than these two great personages, she succeeded in reopening. *Truth in Wine* was to be given, but the archbishop succeeded in preventing the representation of that piece. "It seems," said the dancer, "that my lord is unwilling that truth should come out of the cask any more than the well."

A few days after, she condescended to dance a little ballet before the king. The king offered her a pension of fifteen hundred livres: "I accept," said she on account of the hand it comes from; "for," she added as she departed from the king, "it is a drop of water in the sea; it is hardly enough to pay the candle-snuffer at my theatre."

If you wish to penetrate into the mysteries of the opera in the eighteenth century, deign to cast a glance upon this epistle to Mademoiselle Guinard, and the sirens of that dangerous sea. It is a frightful picture of the manners of the court and city in 1775, signed by a *Turk, a member of all the Mahometan academies*. "I can not behold without admiration, the high point of glory which you and your companions have reached. Sweet license, under the name of liberty, has at last opened the career to our boundless desires; you triumph, divine enchantresses, and your seductive charms have changed the face of France. Our palaces and hotels are now but the dull retreat of gloomy Hymen, where indolent wives languish in ennui, under the guard of powdered

porters, who, like the marble at the door, serve merely to point out the hotel of the master, and the prison of his sad helpmate; while lively youth crowded in your little dwellings, make them the abode of love and sport, and your suppers are everywhere the despair of the great. Sovereign of fashion, is it not you who set them? Your taste determines them; the dimensions of your plumes become the common standard. The woman who studies at her glass to copy you in detail, in order to please, dares not imitate you on a grand scale, or follow nobler models. Divine age, that treads under foot prejudice and law, that confounds all conditions and ages, that consecrates all excesses, thou shalt be for ever celebrated in history! It is to you and your friends that we owe this happy revolution in our manners, to all of you belongs the glory, and you enjoy it. Whether, drawn in your elegant chariots, you adorn the dusty Boulevards; or as feathered nymphs, with your hair elegantly dressed and covered with a thousand ornaments, you eclipse in the front boxes the modest matron; or whether, at the monotonous Colysée, with lofty front and bold eye, you display your charms, and draw in your train an eager crowd — are not all eyes turned upon you? Modern Pantheon, thou unitest all our divinities, and all our homage! Your privileges, divinities of the day, are as great as sacred, and why should they not be? Since this happy revolution, nothing stops you, there are no more obstacles in your way. Hymen turned to ridicule, dare hardly show himself. You appear publicly in your lovers' carriages, you wear their liveries, their colors, often their wives' diamonds; your

little mansions everywhere arise from the ruins of great ones, and form, by their number, in the outskirts of the capital and on the Boulevards, a sort of enclosure, a circumvallation, which, by keeping it in a state of blockade, assures you the empire of it for ever. You take pleasure in general for your aim, all men for your object, and the public happiness for the end of your sublime speculations. Yes, ladies, you are the true luxury, essential to a great state, the powerful attraction that draws strangers and their guineas; twenty modest matrons are worth less to the royal treasury than a single one among you; you belong to no rank of society, and are on a level with all, and are the wives *par excellence* of everybody."

In 1777, Mademoiselle Guimard was still leading the same course of life; listen to a journal. "*October 12th.* The parody of the opera of *Eruclide*, which was played at Mademoiselle Guimard's, has been repeated at Choisy, on the eve of the departure to Fontainebleau. The king was so well pleased with it that he has given a pension to the author Despréaux, a dancer of the opera. We may judge by this favor how much of the freedom of the good old times his majesty yet possesses, and how fond he is of a laugh." That good Louis XVI.!

"*December 1.*—The same parody was again represented on Monday at Mademoiselle Guimard's. The performance commenced at ten o'clock, before the most august assembly, composed of princes of the blood, several ministers, and a number of the great men of the kingdom."

I ask you, what more was there at court, except a tedious king?

In 1779, we find Mademoiselle Guimard conducting a revolution at the opera, yet more serious than that of the short petticoats which took place under Camargo. The subject of forbidding the right of maternity to the dancers was discussed, and it was Guimard who prevented violent measures, and who said at the meetings: "Above all, ladies and gentlemen, no combined resignations; that's what ruined the parliament."

She had, however, a serious passion: a poor officer of fortune, who played comic parts at her theatre, captivated her by the intelligence and melancholy of his handsome head. She had not time to love him, but she wept for him with the tears of love. He was killed in a duel by one of her lovers. When the latter came to announce to Guimard, that he had just killed a fellow who had maintained to him he was not loved, she gave herself up to unbounded sorrow, and said to him passionately: "No! I do not love you; it was he whom I loved."

About 1780, Mademoiselle Guimard almost falls into oblivion. Here and there the gazettes make a passing mention of her beautiful style of dancing at the theatre, and pirouetting in life. But it is a subject out of fashion; people cease to ruin themselves for her caprices; she is too well known in every respect to excite further curiosity. Thus passes renown; we view its approach with ardor; we strew branches of laurel in its path, and place immortal crowns upon its brow. When once arrived we treat it as an old friend who teaches us nothing new. We see it depart without regret, scarcely taking time to bid it farewell.

What became of Guinard after her fabulous triumphs? These gipsies of the opera appear without telling us where they come from, and disappear without telling us whither they go. Was she silently extinguished at a church-door like one of her brilliant companions? Did she keep for her dying day a little of her scandalous fortune and her mournful glory? Did she awake in terror, like Fragonard, her painter in ordinary, in another world, that is, in the republic one and indivisible? All we can assert, without doubt, is, that she died alone, without gaining a tear, a regret, or a remembrance, unless it were from the prodigal sons she had ruined. But, as God forgets not the alms that are given with two hands, the hand of fortune and the hand of the heart, much will be forgiven her on high. To give alms is to do penance; it is to remember God; it is to take the path to heaven!

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I could still have wished to pass over in silence the end of this gallant career. She who called herself the rival of a queen, who contended in magnificence with a king—she who, in her character of goddess,* considered marriage too far beneath her, ended by marrying, instead of a German prince, the *Sieur Despréaux, professor of the graces to the Conservatory*, with whom she died in silence at a virtuous abode in the Marais.

* A sculptor has moulded her foot, which I have under my hand. It is the foot of Diana the huntress, haughty, delicate, divine! *Praxiteles* never cut in marble a foot more noble and impassioned.

SOPHIE ARNOULD.

IN the eighteenth century, there flourished in France, a wild garland of beautiful women, who are almost all worthy, from their genius, of being remembered with the courtesans of Greece. There was an Aspasia, who taught lessons of government, if not of eloquence, to Louis XV. who, it is well known, was not altogether a Socrates, or a Pericles; a Laïs, a Leontium, a Phryne, a Thaïs, a Thargelia, who, under the names of Dubarry, Guimard, Laguerre, Gaussin, and Sophie Arnould, enchanted Versailles and Paris, the court and the theatre. And as in ancient Greece, Thaïs found her Aristippus, Leontium her Epicurus;—I am not speaking of disciples;—Phryne her Praxitiles, Thargelia her Xerxes; in France, all these wild and beautiful creatures, with the exception of Marion Delorme, or Ninon de Lenclos, Pompadour, or Dubarry, were trained up in the theatre, the theatre, *the school of morals!*

There are some severe people who would condemn at once without giving them a hearing, all these women who were alike gay and sad, “as perverse

creatures unworthy the memory of man; sinners without repentance, who died in mortal sin." This is what they say in their indignation, without a single tear of charity for these lost sisters. They are wrong. I do not present myself as the bad advocate of a bad cause. Thank God, the altar of Bacchus is overthrown, Venus drowned in tears; sentiment triumphs. The grape reddens on the hillside; but the soul has now, more than ever, wings which raise it to the splendors of the heavens. Notwithstanding, I can not help feeling a compassion which is entirely religious in its nature, for some of these women that I often meet on my path in tracing out the more serious history of the eighteenth century. As they had a large share of the sun of their day, that familiar history, which is appropriate to literature and the arts, which records on the same page, opinions and follies, persons and passions, in a word, true character, should give a glance at those personages who have been too much despised. The honest historian should be bold enough to go everywhere. Nothing that either flourishes or fades under the sun is unworthy of his study: the muse is a perpetual virgin, that traverses the world without soiling the whiteness of her feet. Moreover, this is but a simple portrait in pastel, with a smile upon the lips, a shade upon the brow, a bouquet of roses upon the bosom.

Sophie Arnould was born in Paris, in the midst of the carnival, in the year 1740. She was born in the old mansion of Pontbieu, Rue Béthisy, in the bed-chamber where Admiral de Coligny was assassinated, and where the beautiful Duchess of Montbazou

died. "I entered the world through a celebrated door," Sophie Arnould used to say. While she was yet a child, her mind had received a certain hue of romance from the memory of the amours of Madame de Montbazou, and Monsieur de Rancé. This old mansion of Ponthieu had become a hotel under the management of the father and mother of Sophie Arnould. These good people had five children; but thanks to their good inclinations, and the revenue of the hotel, these children were brought up with a pious and affecting care. Sophie Arnould had masters like a young lady of good family; a music-master, a dancing-master, a singing-master. She early gave evidence that she would sing in a way to entice all the world; never had an ancient syren vaunted by the poets a voice more full of freshness and melody. Her mother knew that this voice was a treasure. "We shall be as rich as princes," Sophie Arnould used to say when a child; "a good fairy was present at my birth, who endowed me with the power of changing at the sound of my voice, everything into gold and diamonds; others vomit toads and serpents, but I will pour out floods of pearls, rubies, and topazes."

Her mother took her to some religious communities to sing requiems. One day, at Val-de-Grace, the Princess of Modena, who had gone into retirement there, having heard the charming voice of Sophie, ordered her to come to her hotel; the young girl had already considerable sprightliness of conversation, she chatted with the grace and sweetness of a bird; she succeeded in charming the duchess, who said to her, giving her a necklace: "My beautiful

girl, you sing like an angel, you have more genius than an angel! your fortune is made."

From that day the name of Sophie Arnould became current in the world; her grace, her beautiful eyes, her repartees, but especially her enchanting voice, were spoken of everywhere. Monsieur de Fondpertuis, the minister of the court-pleasures, came one day in his coach to take her to the Marchioness de Pompadour. "I forbid you saying a word," said the noble courtesan, "do not speak but sing." Sophie sang without urging, some of Philidor's songs; never did a nightingale shake out of her throat so many pearls, never did its song of spring-tide penetrate the grove with more freshness; it was the dew of the morning which glistens in the sun's rays. Madame de Pompadour applauded with enthusiasm. "Young girl, you will make some day a charming princess." Madame Arnould who was present, fearing that her daughter was to play too high a part on this earthly stage, replied to the marchioness: "I do not know what you mean; my daughter has not sufficient fortune to marry a prince; on the other hand, she has been too well brought up to become a princess of the theatre."

Notwithstanding, from that day, Sophie Arnould was on the road to the opera. In order not to alarm her mother, she was first told that her daughter was enrolled only for the music of the king; but soon Francœur, superintendent of the royal music, urged Sophie to enter the opera, telling her that she owed a duty to France, as well as to the king, and that all the hearts in the kingdom would beat with pleasure in listening to her divine music.—"To go to the

opera," she said, "is to go to the devil, but, however, that is my fate!"—We are all the same: we lay our faults, whatever they may be, at the door of fate. Madame Arnould opposed it with all the authority of a mother.—"It is not to the opera, but to a convent you shall go," said she to Sophie, as she locked her up in her room. Fortunately for the devil, who never foregoes his rights, the king of France deigned to mingle in the pleasures of the public; he signed an order commanding Sophie to be conducted to the opera, under the authority of the law. The poor mother did not yet despair of saving that virtue which was already so much subdued; she watched over her life with the greatest solicitude; she accompanied her to the opera, even to the green-room. The rakes of 1757 might flutter about the singer; the only favor they obtained was the overpowering look of the mother!

Sophie Arnould made her first appearance at the age of seventeen. A journalist of the time thus describes her appearance at the opera: "She is the most natural, the most unctuous, the most charming actress, that ever was seen. She is not beautiful, but she has all the attractions of beauty. She has not been spoilt by masters; she comes forth, just as she is from the hands of Nature: in consequence, her *début* was a triumph!"—The journalist was in error. Sophie Arnould had had masters, and she again took others. Mademoiselle Fel taught her the art of singing; Mademoiselle Clairon taught her the art of acting.

Fifteen days after her first appearance, Sophie Arnould was worshipped by all Paris. When she

appeared the opera was overwhelmed.—“I doubt,” said Fréron, “whether people will give themselves as much trouble to enter Paradise.”—All the gentlemen of the day disputed with each other the glory of throwing bouquets at her feet whenever she appeared behind the scenes. She passed along carelessly, as if she had been always accustomed to walk upon flowers. Madame Arnould, who was herself a woman of some cleverness, used to say to these importunate gentlemen: “Do not strew thorns upon her path!”—But her mother might do her best; might open wide her large eyes; Love, who is as blind as a bat, managed to slip in between her and her daughter. Among the young noblemen who obstinately persevered in hovering about Sophie, the Count de Lauraguais was the most desperately enamored of her: he was resolved upon victory. He tried at first to carry off the beauty from behind the scenes: this first attempt failed. As he had a genius for such things, and was fond of adventure, he contrived a plan that was more piquant. One evening that he was supping with some friends, he declared to them that before a fortnight had passed, Madame Arnould would not conduct her daughter any longer to the opera. Next morning a young provincial poet put up, under the name of Dorval, at the Hotel Lisieux. His respectable appearance and his modest air struck Madame Arnould. He related to her, with a great appearance of artless simplicity, the object of his journey: he had left behind him in Normandy his mother, “who resembles you, madame,” and his sister, “who resembles Mademoiselle Sophie,” in order to seek his fortune in Paris as a literary man.

—"Poor child!" exclaimed Madame Arnould, "why did you not remain with your mother and your sister?"—"Do not despair yet. I have a tragedy with me worthy of being played by Lekain and Clairon. Oh, how many nights of delight have I spent over this work of my youth! To tell you the truth, it was not only glory that smiled upon me, it was also love!"—As he spoke, Dorval cast the glance of a serpent upon Sophie, who listened to him with all the curiosity of her heart.—"Yes, madame, there is in my country a beautiful girl, a brunette, full of life and spirit, made by love and for love: I love her to madness!"—"That is a delightful madness," sighed Sophie, carried away by the impassioned manner of the newly-arrived lodger.—"A delightful madness!" said the mother, assuming a severe look; "I would not advise you, my daughter, to fall into it. As for you, sir, you are much to be pitied for having come to Paris to seek your fortune in the company of poetry and love! To be in love and to be a poet at the same time, is to be doubly ruined!"—"I am not of your opinion," said Dorval, while regarding Sophie with passion; "have I not all the treasures of the heart in my hand?"—"That's enough nonsense for to-day," said Madame Arnould, interrupting them; "Monsieur Dorval, besides, is fatigued, no doubt. There is the key of his room."—"Alas!" thought Sophie, who already loved to play upon words, "he carries off the key of my heart!"

Love is everlastingly forced to play a part, to make use of masks, surprises, and deceptions. The love which goes straight ahead upon the great common highway never arrives, but dies half-way; but

the love which travels by a concealed path never misses its object; it takes by surprise, and all is accomplished. Women seek something besides love in the heart of man; they seek also intrigue. They always appreciate the romance which is prepared to overcome them, for, for them, love is a romance. The more it is involved, the more it entices them. The Count de Lauragnais understood women well. Arriving from Normandy, in the character of an artless and imaginative poet, who comes to Paris to seek glory with which to crown his mistress, was it not presenting himself like a veritable Don Juan at the feet of an actress, who, at first sight was ready to give him her heart? It must be said, to the praise of Sophie Arnould, that she had never taken notice of the count de Lauragnais behind the scenes of the opera, where he always appeared with the importance of an hereditary prince. She loved Dorval at first sight, who appeared to her in the sad condition of a poor poet from the provinces.

The conquest was rapid; at the end of a week Dorval carried off Sophie from the Hotel Lisieux. Never was a ravishment more gentle and impassioned; he carried her in his arms fully half an hour. He had made an appointment with his lacquey, but he had mistaken the street. Half a century afterward, the Count de Lauragnais having become a peer of France, and Duke of Brancas, described this romantic ravishment with all the fire of youth: "She was Psyche, I was Zephyr. I had wings, the wings of love. Poor frightened turtle-dove! she lay so lightly upon my bosom that I was afraid of her flying away. She began to weep. 'What will my mother

say?'—'I have a flood of diamonds for you.'—'My poor mother!'—'I have also a necklace of the finest pearls.'—'Who will console her?'—'By-the-by, I forgot to tell you that I have hired a little hotel for you, somewhat better furnished than the Lisieux hotel.' At this moment, the count succeeded in finding his carriage; "The remainder may be guessed, that is the reason I say nothing about it."

This event put the whole court and city in commotion: Madame Lauragnais and Sophie Arnould were both pitied. It is known that the Count de Lauragnais defied public opinion, like a beautiful girl during the carnival, who changes her disguise each day. Sophie was already the fashion in the world of wicked passions. Her fame shone with a splendid brilliancy: she had never before been compared but to Orpheus, she was now compared to Sappho and Ninon. As she possessed a fluent readiness of speech, a great freedom of thought, and a wanton grace of style, it was soon settled that she had gathered the heritage of Fontenelle and Piron; every one of her repartees passed from mouth to mouth, from Versailles to the Courtille. She was celebrated by the whole pleiad of the poets, the warblers of the times. This was not the whole of her glory; the whole Encyclopædia met at her house, in order to study philosophy in full liberty: it must be mentioned that the suppers at Sophie Arnould's were better than any others. Proud of her success in society, she did not forget the opera, the true theatre of her glory; she always sang with a fresh and melodious voice; she acted besides with all the grace, and all the sentiment of a great actress. Garrick, during his visit to Paris, declared

that Mademoiselle Arnould was the only actress of the opera that pleased his eyes, and moved his heart.

In spite of the remonstrances of the court, the Count de Lauragnais continued to live with her under the same roof. Madame de Lauragnais, who was a model of an injured woman, sold her diamonds in order that her husband might do honor to his rank; but God only knows how many diamonds it would have been necessary to sell, in order to support the luxury of Sophie Arnould: her hotel was a palace, her saloon a rich museum, her toilette fit for a fairy. In the midst of such a life of wild and profuse expense, would it be believed? the Count de Lauragnais and Mademoiselle Arnould loved each other with the tenderest affection.

Four years passed in this way, to the great surprise of the friends of the count and of the singer. Never did such a love take its rise upon the boards of the opera. Sophie Arnould, as might be imagined, was the first to grow weary; during the count's absence for a short time, she decided that it was time to break the connection; she did not wish to keep anything of his, she ordered a carriage, put her jewels into it, her laces, her letters, all that reminded her of the happiness she had had in his company. "Go," said she to her lacquey, "order the carriage to drive to the house of Madame de Lauragnais; all that it contains belongs to her." When the lacquey was about obeying her orders, she called him back: "Wait, I have forgotten one very important matter." She sent for her waiting women, "Bring me the count's two children. They certainly belong to him," said

she as she walked backward and forward in her apartment. The two children were brought, one was still in his cradle, the other had just begun to lisp a few words. She kissed them both and bid them farewell. "Here," said she to her lacquey, "La Prairie, take these children in the carriage, and carry them off with the rest of the things." La Prairie obeyed without saying a word; he drove straight to the Hotel Lauragnais, where the countess was all alone. The poor woman received the children and sent back the jewels. The women of the eighteenth century have been often reviled; ought not this act do a great deal in the way of absolution? are there not a great many women of the present day who would have kept the jewels, and sent back the children?

The love of the two lovers did not end here. After some infidelity, they returned to the first starting-point. It had created great scandal, it was still greater when the reconciliation became known. The count made several journeys; it is understood that during his absence, Sophie Arnould allowed her heart to go a travelling. "Oh! cruel one," said the count to her on his return, "you have been a greater traveller than I have been."—"A rolling stone gathers no moss," she replied, "but alas! my heart has gathered a good deal of emmi. The Prince d'Hémin, was nearly the death of me with his bouquets, his madrigals, and his money; it was a veritable shower of love."—"Wait," said the count, "I will deliver you from this troublesome prince." On the same day, 11th February, 1774, he called together four doctors belonging to the faculty of Paris: "I have an important question for your decision," said

he to them with great gravity; "I want to know if it is possible to die of *ennui*." After a profound deliberation, the doctors decided the question in the affirmative. They justified their opinion in a long preamble, and then signed it with the most serious air in the world. "And its remedy?" asked the count: they decided that it was necessary that the mind of the patient should be diverted, that there should be a change of scene and of society. With this writing in his possession, the count went straight to a commissioner, to make a charge against the Prince d'Hénin, of worrying Mademoiselle Arnould with attentions, to the extent of killing her with *ennui*. "I demand in consequence, an injunction upon the prince, to prevent him from visiting the singer until she is free from the disease of *ennui*, with which she is attacked, and which will be her death in the opinion of the faculty, which would be a public as well as a private misfortune." It might be guessed that such a joke would end in a duel. The prince and the count fought with each other to such good—or bad—purpose, that on the very evening of the duel, they met each other at the house of Sophie Arnould.

A little while before the revolution, she abandoned the theatre, the passions of the opera, and the passions of the world, for retirement in the country. She imitated Voltaire, Choiseul, Boufflers: she was enthusiastically fond of farming, like the queen Marie-Antoinette; she kept cows and sheep; she made butter and cheese; she made her own hay and gathered her own peas.

In the midst of the revolution she sold her little estate, in order to buy a house at Luzarches which had

belonged to the penitents of the third order of Franciscans. As she was always clever, she had the following inscription put over her door: *Ite missa est*. She busied herself about her salvation and death. This woman, who like a Magdalen, had made her heart the sport of every wind of the spring, had profaned her soul by all kinds of wicked love, prepared herself for death with a kind of cloistral voluptuousness. At the end of her park, in a ruined convent, she had built her tomb, and inscribed upon the stone the following passage from Scripture:—

Multa remittuntur ei peccata, quia dilexit multum.

Would it be believed? The sans-culottes of Lazarches disturbed her in her retreat, taking her for a nun! They made a domiciliary visit one morning to the house of the penitents.—“My friends,” said she, “I was born a free woman; I have always been an active citizen, and know the rights of man by heart.”—The sans-culottes would not trust to her word; they were about taking her to prison, when one of them observed a marble bust upon a bracket; it was Sophie Arnould, in the character of Iphigenia; this man, deceived, no doubt, by the scarf of the priestess, thought it was the bust of Marat.—“She is a good citizen woman,” said he, as he bowed to the marble bust.

Sophie Arnould had still left an income of thirty thousand francs, and friends without end. In less than two years, she lost all her fortune and her friends. She returned to Paris with a few things saved from the wreck. A bad lawyer, who had the management of her property, succeeded in completing

her ruin. She fell into absolute misery and profound solitude. She knocked in vain at the doors of all those who had loved her. She knocked, indeed, at many a door, but it was like knocking upon their tombs! those who had loved her were no longer there. The prison, exile, and the scaffold, had dispersed them for ever. She was reduced to the extremity of asking aid from a hair-dresser who had dressed her hair during her better days. This man lived in the rue Petit-Lion. He gave her an asylum, but in a miserable nook, without light and without a fireplace, where the poor woman shivered with cold and wasted away. She paid dearly for her past greatness; certainly Mary Magdalen never underwent so severe a penance. Notwithstanding, she still sung.—“That voice,” says a biographer, “which resounded like thunder in Armida, and which faintly sighed in Psyche, was heard mingling in the mystic concerts of some obscure religious sects; the reflection upon the uncertainty of events and the mystery of fate, found utterance in a moan!”

One day that she was as usual shivering in her room, without complaining, and not despairing of her star, rebuilding for the thousandth time the castle of the happy days of her life, the hair-dresser entered her chamber.—“Well!” said she to him, good-naturedly, “is that the way to come into a room, without knocking?”—“This is, truly, the time for joking!” said the hair-dresser, with an angry manner; “do you know what has occurred? They certainly take my wig for the sign of an inn. The Comte de T— has just alighted at my shop.”—“The poor man!” exclaimed Sophie Arnould.—“He comes

incog. from Germany, without a son. The Lord be praised! If all the people whose hair I have dressed should come to me for food and lodging, I shall have my share!"

Sophie Arnould went down into the shop.—"Is it you?" exclaimed the Count de T—, throwing himself upon her neck.—"It appears to me, indeed, like a romance. Exile must be hard to bear, since you are willing to come back to this city, all deluged in blood, where you have no friends. Believe me, you will find yourself more of an exile in Paris than at the court of the king of Prussia."—"What matters it?" said the Count de T—, "have I not found one heart that remembers me?"—They embraced each other again, and swore that they never should be parted. The hair-dresser lodged his new guest in a garret in the fifth story. At break of day, Sophie Arnould went up stairs to him with a cup of coffee in her hand; they shared it together, in a fraternal way, after which they talked of past times, in order to try and forget somewhat the anguish of the present. At dinner-time, the hair-dresser begged them to come down into his back-shop, where they all dined, the best they could, at the same table.—"I have only one table and one porringer," said the honest fellow: if it was not for that, I would not take the liberty of dining with you; but," added he, with a spice of roguery, "different times, different manners!"

A curious chapter might be written upon this interior of the hair-dresser, harboring two such illustrious guests. There would be more than one piquant saying, more than one philosophical thought, more than one picture of deep human interest to be col-

lected. It is very much to be regretted that Sophie Arnould, who wrote such charming letters, did not describe in detail her residence in the Rue du Petit Lion. It is not known what became of the Count de T—; I could never find out his real name. The memoirs of the day say that he had been, in his youth, “one of the handsomest pluckers of grapes from the *espalier* of the opera.”

Sophie found her good star again before death. Fouché had been one of her lovers; having become a minister in 1798, he held one morning a supposed-highly important audience with a woman who was said to have some secrets of state to communicate. He recognised Sophie Arnould, listened to her history with emotion, and decided at once that a woman who had enchanted by her voice and her eyes, all hearts for the space of twenty years, deserved a national recompense; he consequently bestowed upon her a government pension of twenty-four hundred livres, and ordered an apartment in the Hotel d'Angevilliers to be given her. Sophie Arnould, who on the evening before was without a single friend, found troops of them visiting her at her new residence. All the poets of the day, who were bad poets, all the actors, all the frequenters of the Caveau, assembled in her house as if it had been another Hotel Rambouillet, only, instead of affected conceits, true French gaiety overflowed there.

It might be possible, like the biographers, to quote some of the sayings of Sophie Arnould; but this kind of wit is not current now-a-days among decent folks; it is the wit over one's wine, as was said of Dancourt's wit. Among the sayings that might be

quoted to the glory of this gay, free and original wit, let us not forget the following: Mademoiselle Guimard had written a letter to Sophie full of malice, in which the latter was charged with having committed the seven capital sins seven times a day. She replied as follows, "*I double you*," and she signed her name.

She had Rulhières and Beaumarchais for lovers. She has been charged with having often borrowed her wit from her lovers. Why are not her lovers charged with having shone with hers?

In 1802, at the same time there was buried without pomp, without noise, and without show, three women who, for nearly half a century, had filled France with the brilliancy of their beauty, the pomp of their talent, or the noise of their amours; Sophie Arnould, Mademoiselle Clairon, and Madame Dumesnil. Sophie Arnould, while confessing during her last hour, related to the curé of Saint-Germain L'Auxerrois, all her wicked love-passions. When she described to him the fierce jealousy of the Count de Lauraguais, him whom she had loved the most, the *curé* said to her, "My good woman, what bad times you have passed through."—"Oh!" exclaimed she with tears in her eyes, "they were good times! I was so miserable!" This heartfelt touch, that a poet has given in verse, consoles me for all the wicked wit of Sophie Arnould.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE AT THE TRIANON.

A RUSTIC MASK IN ONE ACT.

AT THE LITTLE TRIANON ON THE BORDERS OF A LAKE.

SCENE I.

THE QUEEN, MARIE-ANTOINETTE.

Now I am no longer the queen ; here I am simply a woman, the humblest one in the kingdom. God be praised ! little birds, celebrate my joy in song as you do your own. May your warblings reach the heavens with the perfume of the roses ! Announce to the God of Nature that the best days of my life have been passed in this park, in the shade of the chestnut groves, upon this verdant turf, in the retirement of these humble cottages, sailing idly in these barks ! It is here alone that I can partake of the blessings of earth and sky, of the sun and of love.

(She is seated on the borders of a lake, and leans her head upon her hand.)

SCENE II.

THE QUEEN, MADAME DE POLIGNAC.

MADAME DE POLIGNAC. Madame, you are in a pensive mood!

THE QUEEN. Ah! is it you? an agreeable surprise! Do you know what I was thinking of?

MADAME DE POLIGNAC. The happiness of your subjects.

THE QUEEN. You are wrong; have I any subjects when I am here? I was just in the humor to declaim in the old-fashioned way against the throne.

MADAME DE POLIGNAC. Not against the throne of beauty and of grace.

THE QUEEN. Against the throne of kings, the saddest prison-house that can be found on earth. Formerly at Vienna, I was as free as the bulfinches that sing. I sang myself then! Why was I so blind as to be caught in the snare? You see, my beautiful duchess, you will never know in what chains I drag out my life.

MADAME DE POLIGNAC. Chains forged of flowers.

THE QUEEN. Chains of flowers! Alas, the first link is Louis XVI.; who knows who will be the last! A thousand times happier are those who are born into the world in an humble wicker cradle; they do not possess a kingdom, but they have their life to themselves.

MADAME DE POLIGNAC. No one is the mistress of her own life, God alone has the power to govern all here below.

THE QUEEN. Ah! if I was not queen of France,

you would see how I would pass my life according to my own inclination. Would God hinder me from breathing the free air, from climbing the hills, from plucking the daisy and the primrose? How happy would I be to carry my rye-crust to the valley, drink at the spring, and seat myself on the rock? The bread, the water of the spring, all these would be mine. while, as queen of France, you know, to believe those spouting philosophers, the bread I eat is the bread of my subjects, the water I drink is the sweat of the labor of the people. If I am seen to smile, there is a scandal at once, on the pretext that there is misery in France. What is left to me then, to me? Believe me, I am poorer than any peasant-woman; her misery is blessed of heaven; her cabin is in ruins, but has she not the whole valley for a dwelling-place? has she not tents formed by the green trees, which God himself upholds? In drinking from the running stream, she has no golden goblet, but it is much pleasanter to drink out of her hand. Besides, the little she has is her own, her tin plates, her cotton curtains, her coarse linen petticoat; it is the fruit of her labor; and I, what have I, I ask?

SCENE III.

THE QUEEN, MADAME DE POLIGNAC, COUNT D'ARTOIS, *afterward*,
MADAME DE COIGNY, AND MADAME D'ADHEMAR.

COUNT D'ARTOIS. All the hearts of the kingdom,
On the heart of the king . . .

THE QUEEN. Stop: where there is nothing, the queen
loses her rights.

MADAME DE COIGNY (*approaching unexpectedly*)

Well, how shall we pass the afternoon? Are we to have an audience of her majesty the queen of France and Navarre, or of her majesty, Jeanette the dairy-maid, with her bare arms? Are we to have the pleasure of beholding those white hands milking the cows feeding yonder?

THE COUNT D'ARTOIS. Well, I am ready for anything. Let the queen command, and I am at the feet of Jeanette.

THE QUEEN (*smiling*). Rise, count.

THE COUNT D'ARTOIS (*who had remained standing, falls on his knees*). I obey.

THE QUEEN (*turning toward Madame de Coigny*). What have you in your hand, duchess?

MADAME DE COIGNY. Do you not see, it is a seal? A rose surrounded with butterflies, bees, hornets, and young girls.

THE QUEEN (*reading the motto*). "See what it is to be a rose." Give me this seal, we will make a queen of the rose.

MADAME DE POLIGNAC. What comedy shall we play to day? Shall it be the *Précieuses Ridicules*? Who will be the audience? the king is not here.

COUNTRESS D'ADHEMAR (*in a whisper to the queen*). There he comes; it is he. The Abbé de Vermont has recognised him.

THE QUEEN (*somewhat excited*). Ladies, I am not in the humor to day for a comedy; I have a passion for solitude at present. In the evening, perhaps, we may return to our usual pleasant amusements. In the meantime, I will have a reverie under the shade of my willow that I planted. Would it not seem that I had prepared a shade for my tomb.

THE CCUNT D'ARTOIS. The queen has put on crape, I will not say upon her crown, but upon her heart. Beauty, is it not born to smile?

MADAME DE POLIGNAC. There are some tears more beautiful than smiles, is it not so, Madame de Coigny? You know it is so, you who weep so *apropos*!

MADAME DE COIGNY (*with an air of vexation*). I do not hide myself in order to weep.

THE QUEEN (*impatiently*). Flap your wings, my pretty birds, go warble elsewhere your gay babble, do me the favor of giving me an hour of solitude. Solitude is the counsellor of kings.

THE COUNT D'ARTOIS. Solitude is good for kings but not for queens.

THE QUEEN (*addressing Madame d'Adhémar*). I want to speak to you.

(The count, after a low bow, accompanies Madame de Polignac, and Madame de Coigny toward the great Trianon.)

SCENE IV.

THE QUEEN AND MADAME D'ADHEMAR.

MADAME D'ADHEMAR. I did not hope to see you so soon all alone.

THE QUEEN. You say then that he is yonder?

MADAME D'ADHEMAR. Yes, yonder with the gardeners, whom he is giving some good lessons, according to the *abbé*. It is full a week now, since he has been in the habit of coming here to walk. I was far from suspecting that it was him, I thought he had been in exile. The poor fellow! he has not the air of a lord by any means.

THE QUEEN. He is however a great lord in his way

Most great lords merely represent a name, he represents a man, and such a man! He has grown great with good and bad passions; the passions are the conflicts of philosophy. His genius at least does not smell of the college, it has the freshness of a solitary valley. How eloquent he is at the sight of Nature! if God is his master, Nature is his school. He listens and he sings. His is the voice of the woods and the brooks; his is a heart which speaks, and not the echo of a book. The writers of the great age almost all exhale the flavor of the barren dust of the library; in him there is a good rustic flavor. Others are mere echoes of a youth passed among books: Rousseau is an echo of a youth passed on the mountains. He recalls the pasture, the snow, the periwinkle; he makes you breathe the air of the forest. Others take you to walk in a royal garden, on straight and well-swept walks; instead of listening to the wild concerts of the storm, the hymns of the morning, the songs of the evening, you hear the music of the harp.

MADAME D'ADHEMAR. I passed backward and forward by him, in order to have a good look at him; he is hardly tamed yet: the other day Monsieur de Saint Fargeau's dog attacked him; Monsieur de Saint Fargeau thinking him hurt, ran to him all in a fright: "Can I be of any service to you?"—"Chain up your dog," was all the reply: he might pass for a Diogenes, don't you think so? when he caught sight of me, he put on the look of an owl.

THE QUEEN. Of an owl that looks at the sun. It was your beauty that dazzled him.

MADAME D'ADHEMAR. He looked at me with a

stealthy glance, trying to conceal himself among the trees.

THE QUEEN. He is there! If he should recognise me? fortunately he has never seen me.

MADAME D'ADHEMAR. But if he sees you, how can he help recognising the queen?

THE QUEEN. He is a savage—he only half looks at the women. My dress, besides, has nothing about it which can discover me. I will assume an air of indifference; do you think that the gardeners will succeed in bringing him to us within the enclosure of the little Trianon?

MADAME D'ADHEMAR. The Abbé de Vermont has performed his part admirably: beholding him at the gate lost in a revery without crossing the threshold, he asked the gardeners, as he made signs to them, if the little Trianon was opened to day for strangers. "It will be in half an hour," the gardeners replied. "I will wait then," said the abbé, "and I also," said the savage. Thereupon he approaches the gardeners to talk over with them their plans without further ceremony. In a few minutes the abbé will return, he will follow without doubt, although he may not care to take the same path.

THE QUEEN. He would not like to come this way if he should see us.

MADAME D'ADHEMAR. Who knows? It is only the men he avoids. If there were all women in this world, God preserve us! perhaps he would be more sociable.

THE QUEEN. Is not that him that I see through the gate?

MADAME D'ADHEMAR. Yes, that's the man of truth and of nature.

THE QUEEN. Do you see him? here he comes beating. But see how pale I am, and how I blush!

MADAME D'ADHEMAR. You, before whom the whole world grows pale and blushes!

THE QUEEN. I only believed in the majesty of titles, and I tremble before the majesty of genius.

MADAME D'ADHEMAR. You see that he is not afraid of us; he has been told, that he would perhaps meet some German or Flemish women.

THE QUEEN. Admirable. Let us go without ceremony, and ask him what he is doing at the Trianon.

SCENE V.

THE SAME, JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU.

MADAME D'ADHEMAR (*speaking with a German accent*). Will you accompany us to see this retreat? We are strangers; what village is this?

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU (*bowing*). I am a stranger myself, and live at a great distance from the court. I came here for nature, which shows itself here and there, although they are doing their best to conceal it. I can not tell much of what passes at the Trianon.

THE QUEEN. The walls of the court are not so high, but what is doing there can be seen.

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU. I always pass by without looking that way. Is it worth the trouble to raise one's head to behold the follies of the court, when one is obliged in spite of himself to witness the folly of the town? Dressed in silk or linen, is it not always the same folly?

THE QUEEN. You see the world without its illusions.

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU. I see the world as it is. Is it not our folly which makes us all go to listen to the *dénouement*? God calculated on our folly, in creating the world. So, what does the spectator behold? the spectacle of folly.

THE QUEEN (*aside*). He is mad. (*Aloud*.) Folly, if you will: what matters if it is agreeable? You know, without doubt, from hearsay, what goes on here; what these cottages are for, why these cows are pasturing in the queen's park? This is by no means a mystery at Paris.

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU. I should give but a poor account of what I know so little about.

THE QUEEN. What is the origin . . .

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU. Louis XIV. designed the Grand Trianon, to have a refuge from Versailles during his days of amorous pleasure: Louis XV. designed the Petit Trianon, in order to have a refuge from the Grand. It is here that Madame Dubarry had the train of her petticoat borne by a negro, while waiting the *good pleasure of the king*. It is a charming place; why must we stumble against such recollections? Fortunately, the queen, Marie-Antoinette, has diffused here the perfume of her grace and beauty.

THE QUEEN (*catching her breath*). Have you seen the queen?

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU. I have not seen her, but I have imagined her. She had for her masters, Maria Theresa, Metastasio, and Gluck; she knows that the blood of the Casars flows in her veins. How could she fail to have, I will not say, the nobility and dignity of a queen, but of a woman?

THE QUEEN. Yes, the Abbe Metastasio gave lessons

to Marie-Antoinette (*recalling the thoughts of her childhood*):—

To perdei : l'augusta figlia . . .

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU. Thank God, the queen does not imitate Madame Dubarry; she does not drag a negro at the skirt of her robe; she does not come here, for a wornont wanton.

THE QUEEN. And what does she do here?

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU. She comes here to revive the recollections of her childhood; she comes to forget the golden cares of a throne. These rustic enjoyments have been always to the taste of a court: the shepherdess always dreams of the happiness of a queen, queens seek the happiness of shepherdesses. Under Louis XIV., the same taste prevailed; read the memoirs of Mademoiselle de Montpensier. For the regency, behold the rustic masques of Watteau.

THE QUEEN. These cottages are quite a village; what is the village for?

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU. It is a school of good government (*smiling maliciously*). Unfortunately for royalty, the king is always *de trop* in this village. When the king is away, everything goes on famously: when he is present, it is all over; there is no more laughing, no more singing, there is no more happiness. Yonder is the Marlborough tower; but when *madame ascends her tower*, it is to see that the king is not coming.

THE QUEEN (*somewhat disturbed*). Isn't there a theatre.

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU. Yes, as if the farce played

at court was not enough ! When a woman has the misfortune to be a queen, she becomes so wearied of her station, that she tries constantly to disguise herself as a shepherdess, sometimes as an actress ; but she may do her best, it is the same heart that grows weary, and searches everywhere.

THE QUEEN. For what does she search ?

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU. For that which can not be found at the court ; liberty, love, solitude, all that constitutes happiness here below, or rather the shadow of happiness.

THE QUEEN. Is there not the same happiness at court as elsewhere ?

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU. At the court there is nothing to be found but pleasure ; and if happiness, as the wise man has said, is a diamond, pleasure is only a drop of water (*turning around to look at the meadow*). It might be said truly that happiness dwells here. The Trianon is an Eden, where there is nothing wanting but the apple to pluck. This place consoles me somewhat for the park of Le Nôtre.

THE QUEEN. What ! is not then the splendor of Versailles to your taste ?

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU. I can not feel at my ease there ; its formal magnificence, its trees cut to measure, its fountains imprisoned in marble, all its choice wonders are not in my way. I can not breathe freely there, I who am not clothed in purple. I am always afraid of meeting there a haughty and foolish court, that would laugh at my threadbare coat and my pensive air, or rather I am always in fear of meeting one of Le Nôtre's gardeners, ready to cut my hair, and trim my beard, as if I were some wild tree. At least,

there is an illusion about an English garden, the freedom that the trees seem to have of growing as they please, without having to submit to the sacrilege of the pruning-knife, makes me imagine I am at liberty, I come and go like a lord in his manor, for when I see nature as God has created it, I fancy myself at home. It is there where I build my castles in the air.

THE QUEEN. I understand you; but why do you fear and fly from all who are clothed in purple? Kings are more to be pitied than feared.

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU. It is clear, that they are feared, avoided. Why should they be pitied? Gilded misfortunes awaken no pity.

THE QUEEN. You are a republican, sir; it is on this account that you hate kings.

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU. Oh, madame! I do not hate even my enemies, notwithstanding they have done me deep wrong.

THE QUEEN (*with a surprised look*). You, sir! Are you a king, then? (*recovering herself*). Enemies! he need have none who does not wish them. It is a glory. Permit me to pay my obeisance to you; permit me at the same time to ask you your name.

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU (*with a proud look*). My name is not a mystery; perhaps you may have heard me spoken of. I am Jean-Jacques Rousseau, a citizen of Geneva.

THE QUEEN. Jean-Jacques Rousseau! say rather a citizen of the world.

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU. A little noise, a little smoke, a little dust, that is all.

THE QUEEN. That is the history of kings.

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU. You speak too much

of kings not to belong to the court. (*Looking at the queen and hesitating.*) I did not think that the queen was here

THE QUEEN. She does not wish to be considered as here.

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU. I am far from complaining. I have got rid of a prejudice

THE QUEEN. You will love kings.

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU. I will love the queen.

THE QUEEN. As she is loved at court.

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU. Better. Sincerely, deeply, until that day when the philosophers shall have thrown the last spadeful of earth on my grave. Like the Trappists, this has been their only cry of friendship: Brother, thou must die. Thus, I do not like Pascal, see an abyss before me; I see an open grave. I have no longer a place in the scene. The priests, the parliament, the philosophers, have said to me, as to another wandering Jew: Go, and stop not! Proscribed, banished, driven out, this has been the reward of my works. And, God is my witness, I thought I was teaching mankind love and truth. Blind man that I was! I struggled with the great and the lies of the world, without taking the time to struggle against my own miseries. A poor star-gazer that falls into the well! I was thinking of the life of others without thinking of my own. How have I lived? What have I done with my heart and my reason? I preached to the great family of mankind, where is my own family? Madness! madness! madness!

THE QUEEN (*to Madame d'Adhémar*). He frightens me! such pride and such misery!

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU (*seeing the promenaders pass*). There they are.

THE QUEEN. Who is coming?

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU. Ah, you do not know, then? Those who proscribe, exile, drive me away, or insult me! Do you not see Grimm?

THE QUEEN. It is the Abbé de Vermont.

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU. It is Grimm! it is Grimm! I can see him well; I feel his presence: he is breathing his hatred into the air that I inhale. (*Bowing with profound respect.*) May God protect France and the queen!

MADAME D'ADHEMAR. May God protect the queen! These philosophers are birds of ill-omen

SCENE VI.

THE QUEEN AND MADAME D'ADHEMAR.

THE QUEEN (*seeing Jean-Jacques withdrawing himself rapidly*). There he goes! How wretched all those men of genius are! I prefer my sceptre to theirs. There are, at least, some roses in my crown to conceal the thorns. (*Interrupting herself.*) By-the-by, our masquerade! Call back the fugitives. I will run to the dairy.

It is the sultan Saladin
Who keeps in his garden.....

How does my striped petticoat become me?

MADAME D'ADHEMAR. In your turned-up sleeves you are admirable.

THE QUEEN. Magnificent! Here comes the count d'Artois to turn the mill for me. What a charming miller! He may do his best to affect the grotesque; he is always a grand lord.

SCENE VII.

THE QUEEN, COUNT D'ARTOIS

THE QUEEN. Are you alone, count ?

THE COUNT D'ARTOIS. The Count de Provence is rehearsing his part ; he is to be prompter to-night.

THE QUEEN. Is it to be the Tempest ?

THE COUNT D'ARTOIS. Perhaps ; as for the king he is amusing himself in his own way ; he has locked himself up with a lock of his own manufacture.

THE QUEEN. That's fortunate ; he will be happy then.

THE COUNT D'ARTOIS. And we also. Don't you think it droll, to see him, whom they call the reformer of liberty, passing his time in making locks ? He is a dangerous husband, there is no door that can resist him.

(The count goes to the mill, the queen to the dairy.)

SCENE VIII.

MADAME D'ADHEMAR, ABBE DE VERMONT.

MADAME D'ADHEMAR. Is the abbé going to mount the pulpit ? there is his flock wandering about.

ABBE. Let them make a farce of royalty, that may pass ; but of heaven, that would be a profanation.

SCENE IX.

ABBE, MADAME D'ADHEMAR, MADAME DE POLIGNAC (*disguised as a country-girl*).

MADAME DE POLIGNAC. My innocence is something of a load, abbé, but it ought to be proclaimed aloud ; you should crown me with a wreath of roses.

ABBE. I am proud of the privilege ; in crowning you I will imitate Providence, who has put upon your brow the crown of glory and of beauty.

MADAME DE POLIGNAC. No one could be more gallant. What an agreeable surprise !

SCENE X.

THE PRECEDING, THE COUNT DE PROVENCE (*as a shepherd*),
THE PRINCESS DE LAMBALLE (*as a shepherdess*).

THE COUNT DE PROVENCE.

A crook as a sceptre I wield,
Away with the fleurs-de-lis ;
The violet fresh from the field.
Is sweeter, far sweeter to me.

MADAME DE POLIGNAC. You are right, count, the violet is adorable . . .

COUNT DE PROVENCE. As love that hides itself.

MADAME DE POLIGNAC. I make no comparisons. I am no poet, not I ; I do not improvise, I have neither rhyme nor reason at my command.

THE COUNT DE PROVENCE.

Game of verse you wish to play,
If play I do, sweet Suzon ;
You'll be the rhyme of the lay,
I, the love and the reason.

SCENE XI.

THE PRECEDING, THE QUEEN, THE COUNT D'ARTOIS.

THE QUEEN (*with a shepherd's horn in her hand, addressing Count d'Artois*). Shepherd, it is not time yet to begin making love ; here is your horn, that you left I will not say where.

THE COUNT D'ARTOIS. In the *boudoir* of a beautiful duchess.

THE QUEEN. Call home the cows, it is time to milk them ; see, I am all ready ; Jeanneton will come with the pails.

THE COUNT DE PROVENCE. Come, daughters of Io, the whitest hands in the world (*speaking to the Duchess de Polignac, and to the Princess de Lamballe*), I mean yours, too, are going to milk you.

THE QUEEN. Be simply a shepherd and not a poet too. Do you think the cows understand such language ? Call Red Coat, call Brownie, call Molly. Don't you see they are coming already ! Miller, is your flour ground ? Come, come, we will have a feast on the grass, and a ball in the meadow. Abbé, go get your violin and your bagpipes ; tell the Count de Vaudrenil and the Duchess de Coigny, to come here. For a good country-dance we must have more dancers. (*Seeing the king approach.*) Oh ! the king is coming. (*She grows pale and lets fall her hands by her side.*)

THE COUNT D'ARTOIS. It is ennuï that is coming ; I will go to the mill.

THE PRINCESS DE LAMBALLE. I will go milk my cows.

MADAME DE POLIGNAC. I will go and get crowned with roses.

THE QUEEN (*to Madame d'Albémarr*). Hurry, Jeanneton, we have no time to lose. (*To the Count de Provence.*) Shepherd, let the king pass ; in half an hour, we will have our feast upon the grass. Go, compose some complets.

THE COUNT DE PROVENÇE.

I go wherever she'll lead,
Singing her beauty that glows;
Oh may not I be the weed,
She treads under foot as she goes.
(They all go off.)

SCENE LAST.

THE KING, THE QUEEN *concealed*.

THE KING. I thought they were all there, the overgrown children. (*He takes his seat.*) What have I done this evening?

THE QUEEN (*in a low voice to herself*). Nothing.

THE KING. What did I do this morning?

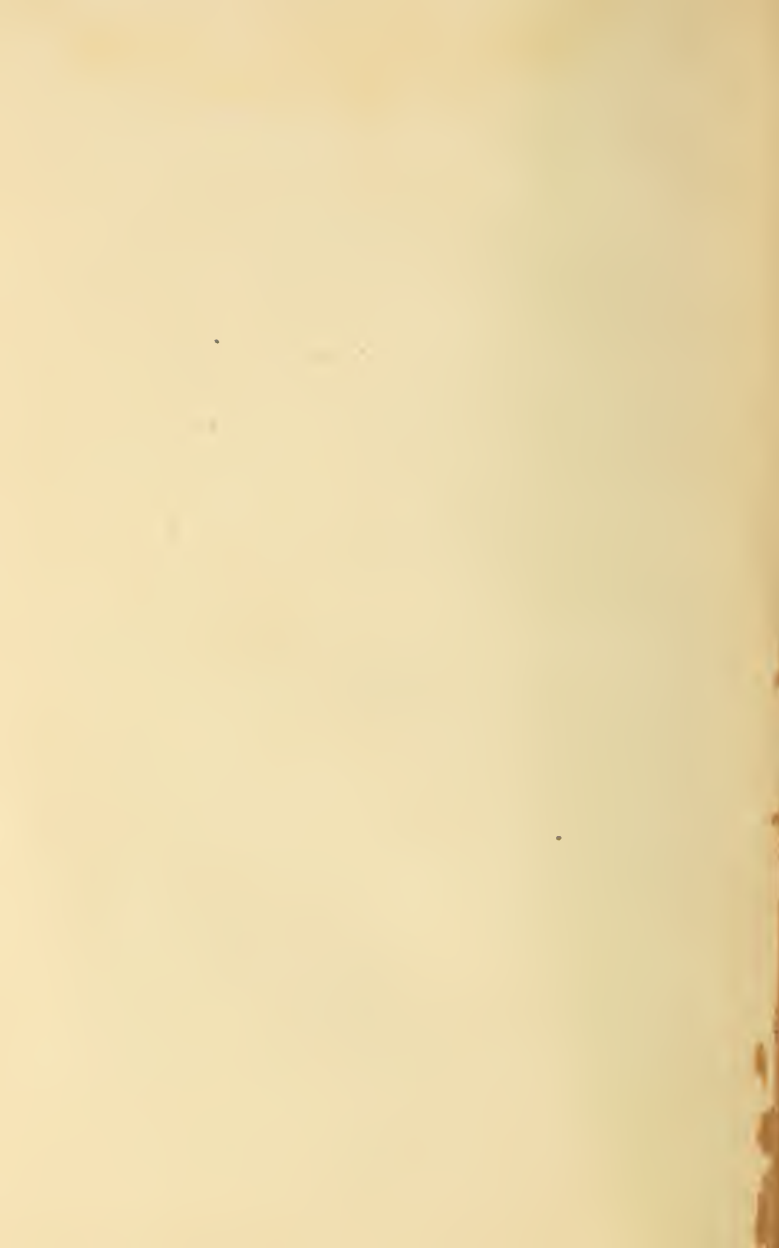
THE QUEEN (*to herself*). Nothing.

THE KING. I am hungry; but at the Trianon there is nothing but milk and cheese, butter and strawberries; I might as well drink so much water. (*Looking at the flocks of sheep scattered about.*) There are, however, some fine mutton-chops fattening yonder.

THE QUEEN. Oh, Jean-Jacques! Jean-Jacques! I am miserable now.

THE KING. My ministers have been advising me a long time in regard to this affair! France, Prussia, Austria (*a moment of silence*). France, Spain, England (*a moment of silence*). In order to govern this kingdom properly (*The king falls asleep.*)

THE QUEEN (*withdrawing*). May God protect France!





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